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The Issue of Women Cantors: Landmarks Along the Way

Historian Jonathan Sarna notes that, “like women, music is both alluring and dangerous ... demanding careful regulation ... and ultimately defining what American Judaism is all about.”¹ In a recent book, Professor Sarna consistently reiterates to what extent Jewish women in particular benefited from the individual freedom afforded by American democracy, beginning with their right to sing in synagogue choirs (1818) and to enjoy a view of the ritual proceedings unobstructed by a screen (1825).² On one early occasion they also served as lay cantors for an informal Yom Kippur service (1821).³ It wasn’t until 1907 that women of the Reform movement were invited to become temple members and officeholders.⁴ By the 1950s, writes Sarna, “a sexual role shift reportedly took place, women replacing men as the dominant presence within the synagogue portals.”⁵ During the same period, Conservative women had to content themselves with the privilege of mixed seating, while being almost completely excluded from the Bimah. In 1954, however, the Rabbinical Assembly Law Committee did accept a minority view that allowed women to be called to the Torah.⁶

The celebration of Bat Mitzvah, which had been around since 1922 when Rabbi Mordechai Kaplan of the Jewish Theological Seminary faculty officiated at the ceremony of his daughter Judith, is what eventually opened the door for full female participation in Conservative synagogue ritual. Having sampled the wonder of leading prayer, of handling the Torah, of chanting from it and then addressing the congregation about what the experience meant to them as B’not Mitzvah, Conservative young women saw little justification in their being denied the chance to do so as adults.

The 1960s witnessed a wave of feminist activism on a broad scale, in which Jewish women played a disproportionately prominent role. Rabbinic recal-

1 Jonathan Sarna, “The Question of Music in American Judaism: Reflections at 350 Years,” Keynote address given at the Milken Conference on American Jewish Music (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary), the writer’s notes, Nov. 7, 2003.

2 *American Judaism — A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 2004: 47.

3 Ibid. p. 50.

4 Ibid. p.195; in Rabbi Stephen S. Wise’s Free Synagogue, New York, NY.

5 Ibid. p. 286; in Park Forest, IL.

6 Ibid. pp. 286-287.

citricance provided one of many “oppressive-male” targets, as *Ezrat Nashim* — the organization of young Conservative women — demanded equal rights in all areas of Jewish life, including the rabbinate and cantorate. Their struggle took a back seat when Sally Preisand received ordination as the first woman Reform rabbi in 1972, Sandy Eisenberg Sasso became the first Reconstructionist woman rabbi in 1974, and Barbara Ostfeld was the first woman to be invested as a cantor by the Hebrew Union College’s School of Sacred Music in 1975. Over the next quarter-century in the United States, 335 women would be ordained as Reform rabbis and 98 women as Reconstructionist rabbis, while 130 women would be invested as Reform cantors.⁷

My own survey of contemporary Jewish worship⁸ summarized the “View from the Right” at that time.

Orthodox feminists observed these developments as spectators from the sidelines, but with great interest nevertheless. Their conclusion: when the time came for them to take the liturgical playing field they would have to set their own ground rules. Lack of rudimentary Jewish knowledge was (and is) anathema to the growing ranks of Orthodox women who have completed advanced study programs for select scholars at all-female institutes in Jerusalem (MaTan, Midreshet Lindenbaum, She’arim College and Nishmat) or New York (Drisha). The degreed women had become as halakhically knowledgeable as many male rabbis, and their hard-won expertise more than qualified them to arrange and lead a minyan for women only. In fact, since the mid-1970s, Orthodox women had been worshiping in their own prayer groups for the first time in 700 years.

Women in the German communities of Worms and Nuremberg were conducting their own worship services as late as the thirteenth century, as chronicled by Rabbi Leo Landman.⁹

The women conducted services in a separate building. Sometimes these sections were adjacent to the male sections and at times connected by a gallery. Women with liturgical and musical talents were engaged to lead these services. Some of these women-cantors became famous. One was named Richenza of Nuremberg, the other, Urania of Worms. The epitaph on the tombstone of Urania reads: “This headstone commemorates the

7 Ibid. p. 341; Nina Salkin, “In A New Voice — How Women Are Changing the Cantorate,” *Reform Judaism*, Fall 1995: 29.

8 Joseph A. Levine. *Rise and Be Seated — The Ups and Downs of Jewish Worship* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson), 2001: 214-217.

9 Leo Landman. *The Cantor — An Historic Perspective* (New York: Yeshiva University), 1972: 68; citing Lowy, *Jewish Chronicle* (London: Dec. 30, 1892), p. 11, transl. taken from I. Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages* (New York: Meridian), 1958: 26.

eminent and excellent lady Urania, the daughter of R. Abraham who was chief of the synagogue singers. His prayer for his people rose up to glory. And as to her, she too, with sweet tunefulness, officiated before the female worshipers to whom she sang the hymnal portions. In devout service her memory shall be preserved.”

By the late-fourteenth century, whatever minor privileges women formerly enjoyed in public worship had been rescinded. The sixteenth-century Galician authority Rabbi Moses Mat¹⁰ credits his predecessor Rabbi Jacob Moellin (*Maharil*), head of the Jewish communities in Germany, Austria and Bohemia, for this ruling. How ironic, for in ancient Israel, gender attitudes had been more liberal!

Of the 42,360 Jews who returned to Jerusalem from Babylon, almost 250 were described as *male and female* singers — “to praise God” — according to commentator Ibn Ezra.¹¹ It is arguable that the synagogue — *mikdash me’at* (“sanctuary in miniature”)¹² — first developed as an institution during the Israelite exiles’ 70-year sojourn on the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers’ shores.¹³ In allowing women to join with men in singing the sacred Songs of Zion the exiles were only continuing a tradition begun by King David, who had separated all the levitical families according to their particular assignments in the House of God. To the fourteen sons *and three daughters* of Heiman ben Yo’el went the task of singing, accompanied by cymbals, harps and Lyres (First Chronicles 25: 5-6). Under King Hezekiah, “all the singing men *and the singing women* mention [King] Josiah in their lamentations to this day, ... and behold, they are written in the Lamentations” (Second Chronicles 35: 25). The role that women played in synagogues during Greco-Roman times is discussed by Hannah Safrai in our opening section, **HISTORY, HALAKHAH, AND CURRENT CONCERNS.**

* * * * *

Three millennia later, Orthodox women again have their own Tefillah Network¹⁴ that coordinates over 100 local groups worldwide, comprising

10 *Sefer Matei Moshe, Inyanei Milah* 4: 5.

11 On Ezra 2: 65 and Nehemiah 7: 67.

12 BT Megillah 29a, based on Ezekiel 11: 16.

13 Louis Isaac Rabinowitz, s.v. “Synagogue — Origins and History,” *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1972), 15: 580.

14 “What Made Women’s Prayer Groups Expand,” *National Post & Opinion*, Feb. 12, 1997; “Reading Torah, Women’s Group Tests Judaism,” *New York Times*, Feb. 16, 1997; “A Turning Point for Jewish Women,” Naomi Grossman, *Post & Opinion*, Mar. 10, 1999.

approximately 20,000 regular worshipers. Many of the same women attend an annual conference of Orthodox feminists that the network organizes in New York. By its second year, 1998, of forty-one sessions on the conference's agenda, thirteen — almost a third — devoted themselves to halakhic questions involving women and t'fillah.

Feminists like Blu Greenberg¹⁵ no longer hold back when attending synagogue services with their husbands, despite the fact that they are seated separately. Greenberg sees signs of this everywhere; Orthodox women are now singing out with full voices, even reciting Kaddish along with the menfolk. She predicts an imminent convergence of two recent phenomena, both of which are unstoppable by any other means. In her view, the reality of women increasingly serving as Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist rabbis, and the reality of more and more Orthodox women engaging in higher Jewish learning, are about to collide. Whether this will result in the ordainment of Orthodox women rabbis remains to be seen.

To keep the halakhic kettle simmering until that transpires, Blu Greenberg raises an immediate objection to one aspect of the Orthodox stricture against women functioning as cantors for mixed congregations. The ban states that any person who does not have a specific religious obligation cannot fulfill that obligation for others.¹⁶ Women are thus exempted from positive precepts that must be observed at fixed times, like praying three times a day at the appointed hours. Thrice-daily prayer is based on the biblical verse (Psalms 55:18), “evening and morning and afternoon I will pray incessantly,” which women cannot fulfill because of an overriding obligation to care for their children. They are therefore ineligible to lead others in a formal service at those — or any other — times.

Greenberg notes the ambiguity of this position, since both the Talmud¹⁷ and Maimonides¹⁸ state categorically, as she puts it: “No set times are given in the Torah but rather were formulated subsequently by the rabbis. The ... original commandment cannot be considered time-limited, so women are obligated [to pray].” If so, a woman could be allowed an exemption from obligatory prayer during her childbearing years, say, until the youngest reaches age 13 when it is responsible for observing mitzvoth on its own. Then, as one who

15 Blu Greenberg, *On Women and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society), 1981, passim.

16 BT, *Rosh HaShanah* 30a; *M'nahot* 43a.

17 BT, *Berakhot* 20a.

18 *Mishneh Torah* 2: Laws of Prayer I: 1-2.

is again obligated to pray in a quorum,¹⁹ a woman could enable every other person present to fulfill her obligation, either through her participation in the minyan or — if she is capable — by her leadership of it as a *sh'li'ah* (feminine: *sh'li'hat*) *tsibbur*.

* * * * *

Amidst this ferment in other movements, reports Jonathan Sarna, “Conservative Jewish leaders engaged in an intricate political dance of shifting alliances, studies undertaken, commissions formed, hearings held, motions tabled, and votes counted.”²⁰ The halakhic ground shifted slightly in 1973 when the Law Committee acknowledged women’s right to be counted in a minyan, and feminists began to don *kippot* and *tallitot*. In 1983 the Seminary faculty — afraid that their institution would miss an historical boat that was about to embark with or without them — voted to admit women to the Rabbinical School. Amy Eilberg was first to be ordained, in 1985, and by then the commissioning of Conservative women cantors was only a matter of time.

As stated earlier, the Reform movement had been commissioning women cantors since 1975, and women had actually been functioning as cantors in Conservative synagogues over most of that same decade. Elaine Shapiro, who had received a Bachelor of Sacred Music from the Cantors Institute at JTS but no cantorial ordainment, was the first woman Conservative cantor to be appointed, by the 700-family Congregation Temple Beth El of West Palm Beach, Florida in 1979. Deborah Katchko Gray studied *hazzanut* under the time-honored apprenticeship system; she accepted a full-time cantorial position at Temple Beth El of Norwalk, Connecticut in 1981, as did Anita Hochman, a graduate of Gratz College’s Cantorial program, at M’kor Shalom in Cherry Hill, NJ. Deborah went on to found the Women Cantors Network in 1982. That same year her WCN co-founder, Jane Myers, accepted the cantorial position at Philadelphia’s Germantown Jewish Center. Deborah Marlowe, trained as an operatic coloratura soprano, would succeed her. In 1984 Linda Shivers graduated from the Cantors Institute with a BSM and was granted immediate membership in the Reform movement’s American Conference of Cantors under a supposedly reciprocal agreement with the Conservative Cantors Assembly. However, the CA would not agree to accept women graduates of either the Reform Hebrew Union College’s School of Sacred Music or the Conservative Seminary’s Cantor’s Institute as members until 1991. Nancy Abramson was elected full-time cantor at Congregation Sons of Israel in Briarcliff Manor, New York, in 1984. Three years later the Seminary

19 (*T’fillah b’-Tsibbur*) BT, *Megillah* 23b.

20 Sarna, *American Judaism*, op. cit., p. 341.

awarded full cantorial status to two women graduates of its Cantors Institute — Marla Barugel and Erica Lippitz — who assumed pulpits at B'nai Israel of Rumsford and Oheb Shalom of South Orange, both in New Jersey.

* * * * *

The stage was now set for two final pieces of the puzzle to fall into place: official recognition of its women cantorial graduates by the Jewish Theological Seminary, and admission of women into the Cantors Assembly. How that came about is related in the continuation of our opening section by Samuel Rosenbaum and Stephen J. Stein. It is a tale marked by good intentions on both sides of the issue. If anything, those in favor preferred to err on the side of caution rather than violate a long-held tradition and simultaneously run afoul of a Rabbinical Assembly Law Committee that had — in 1974 — *validated both the pro and con positions concerning whether women may serve as shelihei tsibbur*. To its everlasting credit — as well as that of JTS Chancellor Ismar Schorsch, who applied a 1983 decision concerning the ordainment of women rabbis to graduates of the Cantors Institute — the Cantors Assembly Executive Council voted overwhelmingly to approve the acceptance of women members in 1989.²¹ Robert Kieval, President of the CA at that time, recalls the enormous pressures exerted by proponents on both sides of the issue. Halakhic support for the CA's position came almost a decade later in a responsum from the Va'ad Halakhah of the Rabbinical Assembly of Israel, headed by David Golinkin. In 2001, the 54th annual Cantors Assembly Convention for the first time held a session devoted exclusively to the concerns of its women members. We're proud to present the remarks of Janet Krupnik, who chaired that session.

By 2005, when Steven Stoehr became president of the Cantors Assembly, he realized that most of the students in cantorial schools were female. He saw this “as a positive development.”²² Yet, Stoehr acknowledged that “women cantors have ... a more difficult time being accepted than women rabbis.” They have to overcome the sound of a male cantorate whose Golden Age ended only with the Second World War, and which still lives on in the folk memory of contemporary Jewry.

To hear the same prayers in the timbre of a woman's voice can be shocking. It's not so much an issue of halakhah as it is a psychological and emotional

21 *Cantors Assembly Jubilee Journal*, Jack Chomsky & Solomon Mendelson, eds., New York, 1998: 370-371.

22 Pauline Dubkin Yearwood, “Local Cantor is National President,” *Chicago Jewish News*, June 24, 2005.

issue, hearing the traditional sounds in a non-traditional way It's still an evolution in the Conservative movement.

The thrust of these editorial comments is to recast the whole issue of women cantors in terms of their role in American culture generally. Like our male colleagues, women members of the Cantors Assembly are considered ministers in the broad perspective of American religion, and it might prove instructive to compare their progress with that of their female counterparts in other denominations. Islam is, of course, out of this picture, but Christianity offers interesting parallels in the turf wars that are still being waged between senior male and junior female clergy in Protestant churches. That tension mirrors the rivalry witnessed in Liberal Temples. Women cantors often find themselves caught between the Cyllis of congregants demanding that they teach B'nei and B'not Mitzvah to lead *Adon Olam* to tunes like "Suicide is Painless"²³ and the Charybdis of male rabbis censoring every tune they sing — almost always with the acquiescence of lay congregational leadership.

Perhaps the history of early Modern Roman Catholicism has lessons to teach us about resolving these tensions, after all, its Reformation preceded Judaism's by three centuries. It took Protestantism five centuries after Martin Luther to ordain its first female ministers. It took only 163 years for American Reform to do likewise after Israel Jacobson's 1809 innovations in Kassel, Germany.

And what about the kinder and gentler way in which women ministers and rabbis lead worship nowadays? Sunday Mass at St. James Anglican Church, Piccadilly, London: "We now rise and walk, hand in hand to the altar, as our cantor (also a woman) leads us in singing Psalm 118, 'The Lord is My Strength.'" From an opposite perspective, how would Baylor University's "Best Preacher" award winner Barbara Taylor measure up against Billy Graham in his Evangelical prime? Or how would any of today's rabbinic functionaries compare to Stephen S. Wise as he fulminated against Nazism in a mass rally at Madison Square Garden, New York in 1934? The fact is that neither can contemporary male cantors hold a candle to the blazing emotion of a Zavel Kwartin or the vocal prowess of a Yossele Rosenblatt. Why should we expect our women colleagues to even remotely approximate the fire of a Bas Sheva or the fluency of a Goldie Malavsky, whose stories — along with those of other Khazntes — are told by Arianne Brown in our opening section: **A WOMAN'S VOICE.**

²³ Words by Mike Altman, music by Johnny Mandel, 1970; a satiric view of the Vietnam conflict.



The section's four articles give evidence that Conservative Judaism is trailing the cantorial curve in this respect, Jewish women have been leading Hebrew prayer for a long time. The lives of six Khazntes who flourished in the U. S. from the 1930s to the 1970s attest to this. Hayley Kobilinsky Pose-row places their careers in historical perspective and Pamela Kordan shows how certain passages in the classical cantorial repertoire can be made less awkward for the female voice. Victor Tunkel documents the life and music of 17th-century composer Leonora Duarte, and Sam Weiss's retrospective and appreciation of the late Israeli songwriter Naomi Shemer's lifetime oeuvre closes the section.

THE WORK OF HER HANDS highlights articles written by and about Jewish musicians who happen to be women. Galeet Dardashti reveals how the burgeoning desire of Israel's Mizrahi community to hear its own traditional music has spilled over into the public sphere. Amalia Kedem examines the quantitative and qualitative pace of musical change in an Israeli Ashkenazic congregation, and Naomi Cohn Zentner gives examples of the influences that London's Sephardic tradition has had upon Ashkenazi synagogue music and practice. **Point / Counterpoint** juxtaposes Nira Rousso's first-person account of what it's like to sing in a professional Israeli chamber choir — Cameri of Tel Aviv — with Edward Katz's reflections on his more than thirty years of participation in four synagogue choirs in Montreal. Dorothy Goldberg closes the section with an original Name-Changing service written for women who have arrived at a crossroads in their life.

A LITERARY GLIMPSE offers Deborah Weisgall's touching reminiscence of growing up in a 1950s Baltimore neighborhood anchored by a Conservative synagogue where her grandfather had been the cantor for thirty-five years.

The **REVIEWS** section opens with Arnold Jacob Wolf's appraisal of Marcia Falk's trailblazing feminist "Siddur," *A Book of Blessings*. Kimberly Komrad reacts to musical settings of excerpts from Falk's work composed and performed by Linda Hirschorn and Fran Avni. Patrice Kaplan analyzes the approach taken by Andrew Bernard's new book in teaching the prayer modes. Sharon Bernstein finds much useful material in the CA's 25th-Anniversary Edition of *Emunat Abba: The Sacred Chant of Abba Yosef Weisgal*, one of its founding members. Roslyn Barak offers a professional opinion on what today's practitioners can still learn from *Great Cantors of the Golden Age* and *Great Cantors in Cinema*, two videos that have just been re-mas-

tered as DVDs with seven additional sections. Deborah Togut assesses our recently retired colleague Hans Cohn's inspiring account of how he rose from the ashes of the Shoah to become a "Musical Messenger" in America. José Wolff compares two anthological CDs of Eastern European synagogue choral performances — highlights of the London Jewish Male Choir's *80 Years* of gala concerts — and the first in a projected series of recordings led by Sholom Kalib, based on his monumental study *The Musical Tradition of the Eastern European Synagogue*.

Our **MUSIC** section offers a movable feast of recitative templates that cantors can use as benchmarks based on long-standing traditions that still have something to say to us today, no matter what voice-type or gender is singing them. The twenty selections — one for each of the years that women have been officially recognized as Conservative cantors — take as their starting points the dual definitions of hazzanic recitative offered by Max Wohlberg²⁴ and Adolph Katchko²⁵: "inspired additions to paragraph endings;" expressed through "combinations of short motifs which fit each individual word separately, and longer singing phrases fitted to a few words."

At the end of each recitative a short list of alternate texts appears, for which the musical templates will work equally well. Through their juxtaposition of neume-like motifs and reciting tones, the twenty recitatives spin musical midrash that, in the words of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, renew the old and sanctify the new. If the selections we have chosen can help every cantor who reads this issue to achieve that liturgical renewal of all-too-familiar prayer texts, then the myth of a male/ female dichotomy in hazzanic vocal style may one day be put to rest. The myth has already been dispelled by our colleagues Arlyne Unger and Judith Naimark, who test-drove all twenty recitatives at the Journal's request and found them roadworthy.

* * * * *

The Journal staff applauds Ms. Isabel Belarsky for her continuing support. We commend her for keeping her father Sidor's name alive through an annual ad in these pages, just as the Judaica Sound Archives at Florida Atlantic University keep the sound of Belarsky's and other inimitable voices alive for anyone who visits their website (www.fau.edu/jsa).

24 Max Wohlberg, "Some Thoughts on the Hazzanic Recitative," *Journal of Synagogue Music*, Vol. 9, No. 3, November, 1979: 82.

25 Adolph Katchko, "Changing Conceptions of Hazzanut," *Journal of Synagogue Music*, Vol. 4. Nos. 1-2, April, 1972: 15.

In this 40th year since *The Journal of Synagogue Music* first appeared (February 1967), I gratefully acknowledge the six distinguished colleagues who preceded me as editor and who did so much to ensure the publication's high standards:

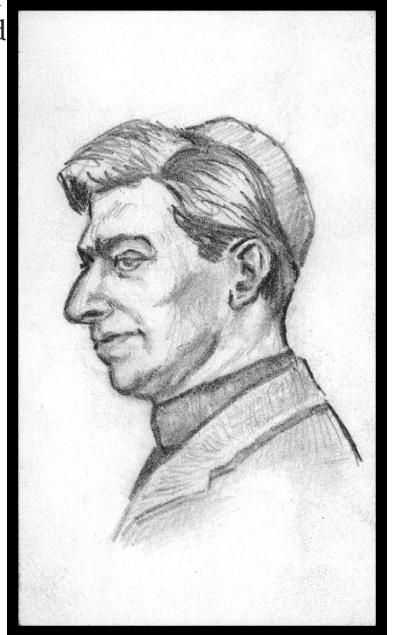
Charles Davidson (1967-1969);
Morton Shames (1970-1979);
Abraham Lubin (1980-1987);
Jack Chomsky (1988-1993);
Eric Snyder (1994-1998); and
Scott Sokol (1999-2003).

Joseph A. Levine
(2004-)

It should be noted that Charles Davidson edited the Journal's forerunner *The Cantor's Voice*, from 1959 to 1966, and him from 1950 to 1958.

This year also marked the sudden death at age 85 of conductor Siegfried Landau, a founding faculty member of the Cantors Institute at JTS. If faculty chair Hugo Weisgall, the son of a cantor, favored the "Sulzer" approach of synagogue music written by a cantor for other cantors, then Landau, the son of a rabbi, championed the "Lewandowsky" strategy of synagogue music written by a composer for cantor and choir to support congregational prayer. As for his not-to-be-missed Friday morning class in Ensemble Singing and Conducting, Mr. Landau's one-liners still resonate in the collective memory of his former students, perhaps the most devastating being: "Gentlemen, that was not an attack; it was a *heart* attack!"

We mourn his passing as we cherish the hazzanic skills and musical knowledge that he worked so hard to teach us.



Siegfried Landau (1921-2007)
Sketch by Joseph Levine, 1958.

History of Salakhah Concerns

WOMEN AND THE ANCIENT SYNAGOGUE¹

by Hannah Safrai

In ancient times the synagogue (*beit ha-knesset* or, as it is also called in the sources, *beit ha-aidah*) constituted a center for the Jewish community. Here the Jewish congregation assembled, not only for worship of God but also for a wide variety of public activities.² This congregation included men, women, and children.

In various contexts, the sources repeatedly mention that the women of the community functioned in the synagogue and found their place within it. According to the Book of Acts, even while the Temple stood, Paul, when he was still called Saul of Tarsus, expected to find women among the congregants when he anticipated visiting the synagogue in Damascus to uncover those who were sinning, erring, and believing in the forbidden new church.³ Later, as a follower of Jesus, Paul visited a synagogue in Salonika (in modern day Greece), where he drew the attention of women with his sermons.⁴ Important women were among the multitude that heard him preach. In all cases, it is clear to the author of Acts that it was natural for women to be found in the synagogue. The presence of women did not arouse any amazement or surprise.

Philo of Alexandria (20 B.C.E.- 50 C.E.), in his *On the Contemplative Life*, describes the prayer assemblies of Therapeutae (a sect of Jewish ascetics, quite similar to the Dead Sea sect). He tells us that when the group gathered in public assembly, both men and women were found together, although they were seated separately. Together they sang songs of praise to the Creator of the World. Philo delights in the harmony of their singing; he is filled with enthusiasm for their devotion. He is not at all surprised that the women of

1 This article was translated from the original Hebrew.

2 See S. Safrai, *Be-shilhei ha-Bayit ha-Sheni U-be-Tekufat ha-Mishnah* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Misrad ha-Hinukh ve-ha-Tarbut: ha-Mahlakah le-Tarbut Toranit), 1981: 143 ff.

3 Acts 9: 2.

4 Acts 17: 1-4.

the company are seated in the same meeting hall.⁵ Elsewhere, in discussing the personal status and way of life of the Alexandrian Jewish community, Philo states that women must preserve their modesty and avoid appearing in public, except when they are on their way to the synagogue.⁶ To Philo, as well as to the author of Acts, it is clear that women were found in gatherings of the community and in the location of these gatherings – the synagogue.

Often, in the course of rabbinic halakhic discussions, it is made clear that women's presence in the synagogue was common. In a city where all the inhabitants are priests (*kohanim*), everyone goes up to bless the congregation, "[And] who says 'Amen' after them? The women and children."⁷ Women, as well as children, do not mount the platform to give a blessing, but there is no doubt that women are found within the synagogue when the priests are giving the blessing. This passage assumes there will never be a congregation lacking in women and children to answer amen. Tractate *Sof'rim* assumes that both men and women attend the reading of the Torah, observing the holy scroll and the written words, and are obliged to say "*ve-zot ha-Torah* ("And this is the Torah . . .").⁸

In the same way, the synagogue is portrayed as a place that a woman can visit for a brief time in the course of her daily routine. "A woman puts her food pots upon the stove, leaving her non-Jewish servants alone at home, until she comes from the bathhouse or the synagogue, and is not concerned."⁹ This means that a woman should not hesitate to leave her non-Jewish woman servant in her home for a brief time to go off to the public institutions where she normally would go. The rabbis chose the synagogue as one of the obvious examples of such an institution.

Likewise, there are halakhic discussions dealing directly with the attendance of women in the synagogue: Is a woman permitted to enter the synagogue

5 Philo, *On the Contemplative Life*, p. 32 ff. He emphasizes here that women, just like men, also arrive regularly at these gatherings. It is possible that he meant to imply that there was something unique about this. It is also possible that nothing surprising is implied in this comment.

6 Philo. *On the Special Laws*, bk. 3, p. 171. He speaks about the sanctuary (*mikdash*), but we may assume that these words are only a use of Alexandrian terminology, and that he intends a reference to the house of worship in Alexandria, the synagogue.

7 *JT Ber.*, end of chap. 5.

8 *Sof'rim* 12: 14.

9 *Av. Zar.* 38a-b.

during her menstrual period?”¹⁰ Is a jealous husband authorized to stop his wife from going to the synagogue because of his jealousy?”¹¹ For our purposes here, the answers are not important; rather, what interests us in the reality that emerges from the questions themselves – women were accustomed to attend the synagogue.

Having established this fact, we may now inquire in more detail about women’s place there. Where did women sit? Were women present in the synagogue building itself, or was there a separate location for their activities, an *ezrat nashim*? Did the women have defined roles in activities within the synagogue? What was their social or religious standing in the synagogue or in the organized community of the synagogue?

In an extensive and convincing article, Samuel Safrai, my father and teacher, proved that there is no archaeological evidence from the ancient period, either in Israel or the Diaspora, to indicate that there was a special, separate place for women in the synagogue.¹² In addition, since none of the literary and halakhic sources indicating the presence of women in the synagogue prove that women were separated from men, it is highly doubtful that a husband would be jealous of his wife if she would be sitting only among women. There is room for jealousy, however, if he envisioned her sitting among men and did not trust her.”¹³

In the synagogue at Phocaea (a Greek settlement on the Aegean Coast of Asia Minor), a generous woman, known as Tation, was awarded a golden crown and the privilege of sitting in a seat of honor in the synagogue. From our archaeological finds we know that, in ancient synagogues, seats of honor were to be found in the front of the synagogue (*prohedria*). This esteemed woman could only have been sitting in a congregation where it was possible to honor women as well as men, by seating them in a prominent location.¹⁴ Paul, in his speech to the Corinthian congregation, warns the women not to speak up in the community, not even to ask any questions, but to inquire

10 See S. Safrai, “Was There an *Ezrat Nashim* in the synagogue of the Ancient Period?” (In Hebrew) *Tarbitz* 32: 4 (1963): 335.

11 *JT Sot.* 1: 2.

12 S. Safrai, “Was There an *Ezrat Nashim*,” 331-33. Cf., more recently, a long and penetrating discussion by B. J. Broton, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press) 1982: 103-138.

13 See S. Safrai’s discussion on this matter in “Was There an *Ezrat Nashim*,” p. 336.

14 S. Reinach, “Une nouvelle synagogue grecque à Phocée,” *Revue des Etudes Juives* 12, 1986: 236-43.

of their husbands at home.¹⁵ His statement clearly indicates that women sat within the congregation, like their fellow men and husbands. This is the picture that emerges from both Jewish and early Christian sources: men and women sitting together during activities in the synagogue or community house.

As we examine the range of synagogue activities in which women participated, we must divide our discussion into two separate sections: (1) the erection of the building, its physical structure and its administrative management; and (2) the worship of God that took place within its walls.

In her book *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue*, Bernadette Brooten has gathered a wealth of material on the administrative role of women in ancient Jewish and early Christian congregations. From dedicatory inscriptions, as well as inscriptions found on tombstones throughout the Jewish Diaspora, we know of women who bore official titles related to the institution of the synagogue. We also learn about generous women who contributed to the building of synagogues. In addition to Tation of Phocaea mentioned above, archaeological excavations at the synagogue of Apamea (in what is north of Syria today), have uncovered nine inscriptions relating to generous women, five inscriptions on the generosity of women mentioned together with men, and two additional inscriptions describing donations made in honor of women.¹⁶ A significant number of other inscriptions demonstrate the involvement of wealthy women in the building of synagogues throughout the Jewish world.¹⁷ There is, then, clear evidence that women felt themselves to be involved and responsible participants in this important Jewish institution.

From all these inscriptions, one can extract an impressive list of honorary titles connected to the synagogue that were awarded to women. Three women are titled “Head of the Synagogue,”¹⁸ two inscriptions mention “leader” (fem. *Manhigah*),¹⁹ and six relate to “venerable women.”²⁰ Two Greek inscriptions read “Mother of the Synagogue.”²¹ It has been widely assumed that these titles should not be interpreted as describing the actual participation of women in the synagogue but that they were only honorary titles. Brooten however, quite justifiably claims that there is no proof that these titles, descriptive of

15 I Cor. 14: 34-35.

16 See n. 12.

17 See Brooten, *Women Leaders*, 143, and the appendix listing inscriptions of women donors, pp. 157-65.

18 Ibid. 5ff

19 Ibid. 35 ff.

20 Ibid. 41 ff.

21 Ibid. 57 ff.

positions filled by men, were only honorary when applied to women. We are not able to specify exactly what these distinguished women did, but the striking evidence before us is of women who were involved and active in these communities. If the male holders of these titles were responsible for ongoing administration of the synagogue; it is reasonable to assume that women participated in these responsibilities as well.

The worship of God in the synagogue service is focused around three areas: reading from the Torah (the most ancient of these practices), prayer, and the sermon and communal public study. It clearly emerges from our sources that women participated as part of the congregation and possibly even took part in every one of these areas.

Torah Reading

Tannaitic halakhah states; “Everyone is included in the minyan of seven [to go up to read the Torah on the Sabbath], even a woman, even a child.”²² In the early synagogue, it was customary for the same people who recited the blessings to read from the Torah. Essentially, women could have been among those reciting the blessings and reading the Torah.²³ However, in the Tosefta we find the reservation that prohibits women from reading the Torah for the congregation: “One does not call up a woman to read to the multitude.”²⁴ Whatever the reasoning behind this reservation may be, it seems that, in fact, women did not read within the synagogue. The Tosefta continues, and clarifies: “[In] a synagogue that only has one person who reads, he stands and reads, then sits down, gets up and reads, then sits down . . . even seven times.”²⁵ The one capable [male] reader will repeat the blessing and read [for each aliyah], but a woman will not be included among those who are called to read. In the Babylonian Talmud, we find a baraita that offers a kind of rationale for this practice: “But the Sages said, a woman shall not read, because of the honor of the congregation.”²⁶ It becomes clear that at first, women were permitted to be called up and recite the blessings during the Torah reading, but additional considerations served to distance them from this role in the synagogue.

The term “honor of the congregation” specifically refers to synagogue activities, yet its precise meaning is unclear. This phrase appears elsewhere: *A poheah*—a person whose clothing is unkempt and immodest²⁷ — may not

22 Tosef. *Meg.* 3: 11

23 See Safrai, “Was There an *Ezrat Nashim*,” 335, and n. 44.

24 Tosef. *Meg.* 3: 11.

25 Tosef. *Meg.* 3: 11-12.

26 BT *Meg.* 23a.

27 JT *MK* 3: 7

read from the Torah because of the honor of the congregation.²⁸ A prayer leader is not permitted to uncover the Torah scroll in public because of the honor of the congregation.²⁹ In the synagogue, it is prohibited to read from scrolls of individual books of the Torah rather than from a complete Torah scroll because of the honor of the congregation.³⁰ Regarding the women and the *poheal*, it seems that we are dealing with matters of modesty. There is no doubt that the case of uncovering the Torah scroll is more related to burdening the public with additional time spent in the synagogue, and it seems that the prohibition of reading from individual books of the Torah is associated with the types of rituals suitable for the synagogue.

Perhaps an examination of the underlying rationale behind “honor of the congregation” in all of these prohibitions can aid our understanding of why it is considered improper behavior for women to serve as Torah readers in the synagogue. We cannot claim that the prohibition of women reading because of a concern for the “honor of the congregation” stems from a halakhic decision that women were not permitted to fulfill a public obligation. A discussion elsewhere in the Bablonian Talmud rejects the suggestion that a decree of Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, prohibiting priests from wearing sandals when they bless the people, is based upon the concept of the “honor of the congregation.” Rav Ashi there understands that Rabban Yoḥanan was concerned with the halakhic connotation of such an act disqualifying the priest from service rather than any concern for the “honor of the congregation.”³¹ The honor of the congregation, according to this and the above sources, seems to have been a social issue, whatever its exact meaning, and not a halakhically related item. Therefore, women were distanced from reading the Torah in the synagogue because, in the world of the ancient synagogue, having women readers seemed undesirable.³²

28 BT *Meg.* 24b.

29 BT *Meg.* 39b.

30 BT *Git.* 60a.

31 BT *Sot.* 40a. However, the Talmud continues, citing R. Ashi who disagrees with the reason, suggesting another.

32 Judith Hauptman, “Women and the Conservative Synagogue,” *Daughters of the King — Women and the Synagogue*, Susan Grossman & Rivka Haut, editors (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society), 1992: 163; “It seems clear that [the Sages] viewed women as members of a group generally considered socially or intellectually inferior. If women were of equal social status with men, a female reader would not affront the community’s dignity.”

In none of our sources have we found that women were obligated in weekly or holiday Torah reading. In contrast, women were obligated in the Megillah reading,³³ and on this subject we learn: “All are obligated in the Megillah reading, all are fit [eligible] to read the Megillah. Including whom?”³⁴ Including women.” Women were obligated in the reading and, therefore, were able to fulfill this obligation for others, even men.³⁵ Indeed, here we do not find a dependence on the concept of the “honor of the congregation.” Theoretically, women were able to recite the blessing or read. However, this was not acceptable in the social milieu of the ancient world. Only because women were specifically obligated to read the Megillah was the prohibition of the “honor of the congregation” not used to specifically forbid them from reading the Megillah in public.

What is the relation between obligation and the use of the rationale “honor of the congregation”? What should we infer from the different approaches reflected in our sources? Is the so-called social perspective more susceptible and changeable in the face of other issues? It is appropriate for us to ask: Did (or should) the nature of this social prohibition change in the different social realities of later periods?³⁶

Prayer

The Mishnah specifically states: “Women, slaves, and minors are exempt from reciting the *Shema* and from [wearing] *tefillin* and are obligated in prayer, in *mezuzah*, and [in reciting] the Grace after Meals.”³⁷ It is doubtful that this mishnah obligated women in *public* prayer, as it contains only the basic obligation to pray and not specifically to join in prayer within a congregation. Nevertheless, we have already seen that women’s presence in the early synagogue is beyond dispute. In Philippi (in contemporary Turkey), Paul walks from the town to the river, where the Jews are accustomed to meet in

33 BT *Meg.* 4a.

34 BT *AR.* 3a.

35 See Rashi, *Ibid.*, s.v., “*l-atuyei mai?*”

36 Hauptman, *Women and the Conservative Synagogue*, p. 169f.

Anyone who reads the Talmud with an open mind soon notices that the rabbis of the past frequently found themselves similarly troubled ... by the underlying assumptions of halakhah, ... but with great ingenuity they were able to solve the problem. When they sensed that the traditions transmitted to them were ethically deficient, they reinterpreted sacred texts in order to implement desired and necessary changes. For instance, displeased with the fact that the Torah does not allow a kohein to bury his wife — only parents, siblings and children (Lev. 21: 1-3) — the rabbis interpreted *sh'eiro* (“relative, flesh”) in verse 2 as wife, thus stretching these norms to fit their emerging social outlook (BT *Yev.* 90b).

37 *Mish. Ber.* 3: 3.

prayer. There he meets the women as well as the men.³⁸ It could be that the river was simply a meeting place and not a synagogue, but we may deduce that women did indeed participate in public prayer. So too, John Chrysostom (b. Antioch c. 347-407 C.E., Patriarch of Constantinople and Church Father) testifies that many women were accustomed to go to the synagogue on Rosh Hashanah for prayers and the blowing of the *shofar* as well as on other festival days.³⁹ Indeed, he urges husbands to forbid their wives from attending the synagogue or the theater.

Sermons

Women were present during sermons and Torah study in the synagogue, even though they were not considered to be under the same obligations as men to study.

Commenting on the verse, “You are all standing here today . . . your children, your *women* . . .” (my emphasis; Deut. 29: 10), the midrash states: “Even if they [the women] do not understand, they come to hear and to receive from everything. This teaches that everyone who enters the synagogue and hears the words of Torah, even though he may not understand, merits and receives four things as a reward . . .”⁴⁰ According to the midrash, women are not erudite in Torah learning but they do come in order to listen and to merit the reward of one who frequents the synagogue and the house of study. The verse from Deuteronomy does not relate to the synagogue, but the author of this midrash views it as an example of synagogue activities. It is clear that everyone is present: men, women, and children. This reality seems to the expounder to be an outstanding mark of Jewish superiority; in addition, the expounder uses what seems to be a well-known homily,⁴¹ which specifically indicates that women are not included in the obligation of learning Torah.

Similarly, we find elsewhere: “Because of this, young Israelite girls customarily came to the synagogues, so that those who bring them would merit reward, and so that they themselves would be rewarded.”⁴² This concept is also applied to the biblical verses relating to women’s presence at the assembly for

38 Acts 16: 13.

39 Adv. Jud. 2: 4-6; 4: 3.

40 *Midrash ha-Gadol* on Deuteronomy, ed, S. Fish (Jerusalem: Mosad Rav Kook), 1972: 639.

41 BT *Hag.* 3a; JT *Hag.* 1: 1; Num. R. 14: 4, and others.

42 *Sof’rim* 18: 6.

the reading of the Torah once every seven years (*Hak-heil*)⁴³ and, to a certain extent, also at the giving of the Torah.⁴⁴

According to these sources, women were incapable of study and were not obligated to study, but they were encouraged to be present in the house of study and the synagogue to listen. Perhaps they were not permitted to ask questions in public, but there seems to be no doubt that they were present during the time of the sermon. However, we seem to have no evidence of women preachers.

Preaching was not confined to the synagogue. As noted above, Paul went to the river outside the city of Philippi. There he encountered a woman named Lydia, who sold fine textiles. She listened to Paul speak and was convinced by his words.⁴⁵

Sermons were often delivered in the study house, where women were also present. Targum Onkeles (second century C.E.) On the verse, “You will be praised among the women in the tent” (Judg. 5: 24), states: “You will be blessed as one of the women who serve in the study house.” The word “*ohel*,” tent, is interpreted as the study house, and there sit women who serve as students of the Sages: that is to say, women who sit and listen to their words. There is a well-known story about a woman who used to listen to the words of R. Meir every Sabbath eve, and ultimately aroused the ire of her husband.⁴⁶ This is a story of an independent woman who spent time in the house of study without her husband and learned from the scholars, contrary to her husband’s wishes.

Summary

To summarize, the participation of women in the synagogue is well documented in our sources. Women occupied a distinguished position in the synagogue and certainly participated in its founding and administration. The involvement of women in the building of centers of worship is an ancient tradition, mentioned in the torah. The responsibility that the daughters of Israel had toward the worship of God and the edifice designated God’s sanctuary goes back to the building of the Sanctuary in the desert. Exodus repeatedly makes this point: “Men and women, all whose hearts moved them” (Exod. 35: 22); “And all the skilled women spun with their own hands” (Ibid. 25); “And all the women who excelled in that skill” (Ibid. 26).

43 See n. 40.

44 *Mekhilta de-R. Ishmael: Yitro, Masekhtah ba-hodesh*, chap. 2 (ed. Horowitz), 207. Also, Exod. R. 28: 2.

45 Acts 16: 12-14

46 JT *Sot.* 1: 4; Lev. R. 9: 9; Num. R. 29: 20; Deut. R. 5: 15

Although there is no evidence that women led prayers, it is clear that women were present in the synagogue for the worship of God conducted within its walls. The midrash for the section of the Bible about the giving of the Torah repeatedly emphasizes that the women stood alongside the men and took upon themselves the burden of the Torah and the obligation to observe the commandments.⁴⁷ Prayer is one of the commandments to which women are obligated. Moreover, as recorded in the Babylonian Talmud (*Ber.* 31a-b), the tradition of public prayer proudly reaffirms and emphasizes that the prayer of a woman, Hannah, is the model for the order of Jewish prayer. The nine blessings in the Rosh Hashana Amidah are ordered after the nine times Hannah mentioned the name of God in her prayer; Hannah originated the term *Adonai Ts'va'ot* ("Lord of Hosts") in her prayer; Hannah invented the silent prayer; Hannah stood to pray, from which the Amidah prayers derive (*amidah* means "standing"); and Hannah determined the structure of prayers within the Amidah, beginning with praise of God, followed by petitions, and ending with thanksgiving. Hannah's prayer is a classic example of Jewish worship.

The actual participation of women in the activities of the ancient synagogue and in its prayer service seems to have been interpreted by the social reality and the social attitudes acceptable at the time. Thus, we have no hard evidence for women serving as Torah readers, prayer leaders, or preachers. Nevertheless, it seems likely that women themselves made an effort to be included in the various events going on in the community, that they took part in the community's religious life, and that men assumed they were right to do so.

If applied to today, the role of women in the synagogue of the ancient world, as it appears in our literary and archaeological sources, would probably not be extensive enough to satisfy the modern woman's yearning for greater synagogue participation. Perhaps, though, the example of ancient women's involvement can serve as a starting point from which a new path for greater involvement can be forged, in a style appropriate to modern generations.

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⁴⁷ See n. 43.

Cantor Barbara Ostfeld: an Unassuming Pioneer

by Bruce Ruben

In the late 1960s and 1970s a powerful new feminist movement arose, led by well-educated, liberal women, many of whom were Jewish. This second wave of American feminism (the first got women the vote) would permanently change the shape of the liberal denominations of American Jewry, from Reform to Modern Orthodox. Those Jewish feminists for whom Judaism was central to their identity began to fight for equality. In 1970 Trude Weiss-Rosmarin and Rachel Adler attacked the disabilities under which women suffered in Jewish law. That same year Betty Friedan, founder of the National Organization for Women, rejected the ancient blessing, recited by traditional Jewish men each morning, that thanked God for making them men. She retorted: "From this day forward I trust women all over the world will be able to say, 'I thank you, Lord, I was created a woman.'"¹

A group called *Ezrat Nashim* (a play on words that refers to both the women's section of a synagogue and the help of women) advocated an end to second-class status for Jewish women. They presented a series of demands to the Conservative movement's Rabbinical Assembly convention in 1972 that urged full equality for women. Jonathan Sarna emphasized the importance of this issue in his important historical survey *American Judaism*:

The fact that American culture considered the treatment of women to be a gauge of modernity heightened the stakes in these debates. Beyond their effect on the religious lives of women, the debates also pitted the conflicting values of tradition and modernity against one another and shaped Judaism's image within the larger American community.²

Central to the demands of the *Ezrat Nashim* was the right of women to attend rabbinical and cantorial schools and to function in those capacities in synagogues. Though the Conservative movement struggled for over a decade to find a halakhic basis for these changes, Reform Judaism quickly embraced the new trends.³ It ordained Sally Jane Priesand as the first American woman

1 Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 2004: 339ff.

2 Idem.

3 See Jack Wertheimer, ed., *Tradition Renewed: A History of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America*, Vol 2, *Beyond the Academy* (New York: JTSA), 1997: 485ff. for a discussion of the controversy surrounding the ordination of women rabbis. In the 1920s there had been an unsuccessful attempt to ordain a female rabbi that was ultimately blocked by the Hebrew Union College's Board of Governors. See Sarna, *American Judaism*, p. 340.

rabbi in 1972, and Barbara Ostfeld as the first American woman cantor three years later. This article focuses primarily on Cantor Ostfeld's experience at the School of Sacred Music, as the prelude to her successful career. What is remarkable is the natural, organic way this revolutionary institutional change unfolded, an experience replicated in the careers of other early women cantors.

A third-generation Reform Jew, Barbara Ostfeld was raised in Elmhurst, Illinois at the Oak Park Temple. At an early age she began singing in Cantor Martin Rosen's children's choir. She would admit in an article in the *Jerusalem Post* years later that she had had a crush on him.⁴ He gave her many solos and she quickly discovered the power inherent in leading a congregation in prayer. She even resented when he gave other children solos, though she understood he had to be fair. She also had a wonderful musical experience at the Union of American Hebrew Congregations camp, Olin-Sang-Ruby, as she was exposed to the newer Folk-Rock genre being developed in the camps. Barbara unabashedly loved Judaism, and by the age of eight she had decided that she would emulate her mentor and become a cantor as well.

Barbara had grown up in a very liberal, egalitarian family. Her parents encouraged her dream, and even after the family moved to Connecticut, she held onto it. When she was ready to apply to colleges in 1969, Barbara called Cantor Rosen to ask where he had trained. He started laughing and explained that the school didn't accept women. Barbara was incredulous. She applied anyway, as an undergraduate. In retrospect she realizes that it would have probably been smarter to attend college first, because, though the catalogue of classes looked like that of most music schools with a good dose of liberal arts, in reality it was a professional school to train cantors. When she called to get an application, the registrar told her that she had never received such a request before. The woman's slightly officious tone rattled Barbara, but the woman still agreed to send the materials. In truth, Barbara had never really considered the pioneering nature of her plan. Not really a feminist at the time, she was merely following through on her childhood dream. Though she knew of Sally Priesand, then starting her second year in school, it never occurred to her that she herself was a trailblazer. Only years later would she realize the religious significance behind her pioneering efforts.⁵

Barbara encountered other challenges. There had been little Hebrew instruction, nor had many children benefitted from B'nai Mitzvah training in

4 Judy Siegel, "Cantorial Belles," *The Jerusalem Post*, August 21, 1978, p. 5.

5 Dave Congren, "Temple's cantor is a pioneer in her field," *Buffalo News*, March 18, 1995, page A-6.

her classical Reform congregation. Like most, she had been confirmed, and though she could recite many prayers by heart, Barbara could not read Hebrew. At her interview she admitted as much to Cantor Arthur Wolfson, who had asked her to read. Instead she recited a number of prayers by rote. She sang the pieces she had also been using for other music school auditions, incongruously including *Vergin tutto amor* (“Virgin, Full of Love,” an 18th-century Italian art song set to an anonymous text by Francesco Durante). When the piece was finished she attempted to get out the door, but it wouldn’t budge. It was a very embarrassing moment. Finally Cantor Wolfson had to help her. On the other side the entire student body of Hebrew Union College’s rabbinical and cantorial schools were eavesdropping at the keyhole.

Barbara told *The New York Times* that she had been very well received by the twenty-two other students in the cantorial program.⁶ The administration was also supportive. Dr. Alfred Gottschalk, chancellor emeritus of HUC, recalls that there were always women students in the school. Some had elected to become soloists. But before the feminist movement brought it to their consciousness, investiture had not been an issue.⁷ Once Barbara raised the question, Dr. Gottschalk recalls that the faculty and administration, with a few exceptions, were quite positive. Though some faculty members including Eric Werner — a musicologist and one of the founders of the School of Sacred Music — straddled the fence, Dean Paul Steinberg was very encouraging. According to Dr. Gottschalk, Barbara far exceeded the school standards; not only was she musical, but also intelligent and politically aware.⁸

Still, the first year was not easy. Not only was Barbara the first woman, she was also by far the youngest student, since everyone else had already earned either an undergraduate degree or had more life experience. Some were pursuing second careers. Most were also married — she served as their babysitter. The biggest problem in that year was loneliness. Not even a women’s bathroom existed on the floor where her classes took place. The only woman in the TTBB choir, she could only “mouth” her part and pray it would go unnoticed. Especially memorable in that first year was her maiden Purim service. She accepted the challenge of chanting a portion from the Megillah scroll, not easy for someone who had just taught herself to read Hebrew. Never having experienced a Purim service at the school before and coming from a staid, Classical Reform background, she was unprepared for the antics

6 Joan Cook, “A Female Cantor? Two Women Who are Bucking Tradition,” *New York Times*, February 22, 1971, p. 20.

7 Private discussion with the author, July 2006.

8 Idem.

that customarily ensued. She chanted the passage where the wicked vizier, Haman, literally *falls* on Queen Esther in the King's presence, pleading for his life. At that moment one of the professors, Harry Orlinski, ran up onto the bimah, took off his tie, unbuttoned his top button, took off his coat and began to pantomime the scene. Barbara, a very serious eighteen-year old, was caught by surprise. She felt humiliated, while everyone else screamed with laughter. It was with considerable force of will that she kept on chanting.

Her experience improved by the next year. For one thing, two more women (Sheila Cline and Mimi Frishman) entered the cantorial school, along with more female rabbinical students. Though some teachers referred to all the students as "boys," Barbara encountered no prejudice. She remembers being particularly anxious at the beginning of her second year when she walked into a class taught by the legendary tradition-minded cantor, Israel Alter. Not sure if she would be accepted, she was afraid to sit down. Alter said to her: "Nu, in my class all the students sit down." He consistently showed her respect.

Barbara loved both the school and her studies. She came early and left late. She attended Tefillah every day along with another regular attendee, Dr. Eugene Borowitz, professor of Education and Jewish Religious Thought. It was a great time to be at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion; her lasting impression is that the place was supercharged. Among the rabbinical students active in student government were future leaders Eric Yoffe and David Saperstein (currently President of the Union for Reform Judaism and Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, respectively). The school was politically engaged and she was very proud to be there. Active in student government as well, she fought hard to get more text study in the cantorial curriculum as well as more shared classes with rabbinical students. She eventually served as student president of the School of Sacred Music.

On June 8, 1975, Barbara became the first invested American woman cantor. *The New York Times*, which had been following her progress at the school, announced: "First Woman Cantor, An Alto, Invested Here."⁹ There were television cameras at Temple Emanu-El that day as well, as President Gottschalk joyfully placed his hands on her head on the top step of the huge bimah. He put the moment in perspective, citing Reform Judaism's commitment to giving women equality. He noted: "women served as presidents of Reform congregations and on temple boards, and are an integral part of our Reform Jewish institutional life."¹⁰ Footage of the historical moment was

⁹ Irving Spiegel, "First Woman Cantor, an Alto, Invested" *New York Times*, June 9, 1975, p. 65.

¹⁰ Idem.

shown on the local TV news in New York. As unassuming as Barbara had been through her years of school, she now admits that all the interviewing and media attention was “very cool” while it lasted.

It is one thing to obtain the credentials of Cantor; it is quite another to find employment in the field. Would congregations accept women cantors? Would there be a glass ceiling, as there was in other professions? Barbara’s placement experience was always a positive one. The first year out of school, there were no jobs available so she stayed on at her student pulpit at Beth Sholom Temple in Clifton-Passaic, New Jersey. The next year she landed a big position at Temple Beth El of Great Neck, New York. She said that from the beginning, the chemistry was right. The temple even allowed her to bring her eighteen-month-old daughter to the office when necessary. In 1988 Barbara left Long Island to serve as cantor at Temple B’rith Kodesh in Rochester and then in 1990 at Temple Beth Am in Buffalo, New York. Further, her professional organization, the American Conference of Cantors, was always openly helpful. According to Ramon Gilbert, president of the Conference and an instructor at the School of Sacred Music: “Male cantors greeted the newcomers without a tinge of ‘male chauvinism.’”¹¹

Given that the School of Sacred Music, the synagogues, and the Conference have been so open to women cantors, it is not surprising that their numbers have multiplied dramatically. In the years 1975 to 1995 one third of the 108 cantors invested by the school were women.¹² The large majority of every cantorial class today consists of women, and they now serve in many of the most prestigious Reform congregations in the country. Women have also served with regular frequency as presidents and officers of the American Conference of Cantors — Ostfeld herself now serves as director of placement.

This quiet revolution, begun by one unassuming young woman, has transformed the field.

Bruce Ruben is the newly appointed director of the School of Sacred Music. He received a Master’s degree in Religious Studies at Indiana University, a diploma of Hazzan at the Jewish Theological Seminary, and a doctorate in Jewish History at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. As an active cantor he served Temple Shaaray Tefila in Manhattan for twenty-four years. This article is based on a lengthy interview he held with Barbara Ostfeld in July of 2006.

11 Judy Siegel, “Cantorial Belles,” The Jerusalem Post, August 21, 1978, p. 5.

12 Nina Salkin, *Reform Judaism*, Fall, 1995, p. 29.

Founding the Women Cantors' Network

by Deborah Katchko Gray

Having grown up in a cantorial family, I was used to hearing the sounds and issues surrounding the cantorate. My father, son of the legendary Adolph Katchko (1886-1958), was a wonderful part-time cantor in his own right, with a full-time liquor store — he used to say he dealt *in spirits*. Fortunately, he sang and never drank. Unfortunately, his store was never successful because he had no passion for what was in it. His passion was for the bimah where he chanted his father's magnificent music, especially for *Hashkiveinu* when he would be transformed in my eyes into a musical prophet.

My mother was his accompanist for many years, and then helped run the store so he could go off to his Friday evening pulpit. I would go along with my father most Friday nights, the two of us often singing together all the way to his synagogue — and these are among my fondest memories. My mother, who later became my accompanist, had always been both soul mate and best friend. Now, as a mother myself, I realize that the musical experiences that both of my parents had shared with me were unusual and precious.

* * * * *

As a young college student I sang in pulpits every weekend, and led the Boston University Hillel's Conservative High Holy Day services for over 2,000 people. I knew then that this is what I wanted to do. I didn't think it was possible since I had no female role models. But davening was in my blood, so I decided that *hazzanut* must have been transmitted to me while growing up, without my being aware of it.

The following Spring my father took me to a Cantors Assembly convention. He had attended the School of Sacred Music in its early days but did not graduate. There was too much pressure on him just because he was Katchko's son. He loved to sing but didn't enjoy synagogue politics, nor did he have the ego necessary to survive in such an atmosphere. Now at the convention, my father was proudly introducing me to some of his former classmates.

I will never forget their comments when he told a few of his colleagues that I was singing as a cantor in the Boston area.

“Oh, what will come next — topless on the bimah?”

“What else will they think of to fill the pews!”

I was embarrassed and shocked, and held my father's hand tighter. It would take twenty-five years before I became a full member of the Cantors Assembly.

The insecurity and resentment I experienced at that convention with my father led me to feel alienated from the professional cantorate during my college years. I loved singing in Conservative pulpits, and didn't want to be part of the Reform movement. As an undergraduate I had visited the Hebrew Union College in New York, thinking about its cantorial school. But I was turned off by what I perceived as a certain elitism and high-clergy coldness that was alien to my hazzanic roots. (Had Jackie Mendelson been teaching there at the time I would have felt differently!)

My studies with Professor Elie Wiesel in college had left a lasting impression on me. He taught that being Jewish was a miracle — a heritage that has become ever more precious because we are entrusted with it after a Holocaust that wiped out a third of all the world's Jews. If each of us were to take on the soul of one of the six million who were martyred and thereby live a doubly Jewish life, our lives would take on more meaning. We would be lighting Shabbat candles not just for ourselves, but for a soul who was prevented from doing so. I have taken that suggestion to heart ever since. I will always be grateful to Professor Wiesel for this insight and his passion for all things Jewish. It has given a purpose and drive to my Jewish existence.

* * * * *

In 1980 after hearing that a position was open in Norwalk, Connecticut, I asked the congregation's rabbi, Jonas Goldberg, if he would audition a woman cantor. He said, "We've listened to eighteen men; at this point we would audition a monkey!" After my previous humiliation at the Cantors Assembly convention I was delighted to be chosen by the Norwalk committee over all the other candidates. Of course, it was not so much the Cantors Assembly, as insensitive remarks from a few insecure male cantors — but it had stung none the less.

The taunts continued even after my position in Norwalk was secured — from a different quarter. The one Reform rabbi in town asked my rabbi, "What's next? Getting rid of the talleisim?" I looked around the area and realized there were no colleagues to work with or to ask a question. The following May (1981) I went again to a Cantors Assembly convention — this time alone — and sat with a whole table of women! One of them, Elaine Shapiro, was already functioning as the first full-time Conservative woman cantor, in West Palm Beach, Florida — without official investiture. We agreed to get together

during that convention with other women in the same situation and see if we could organize ourselves into a support group. A dozen of us met the next day, some studying *hazzanut* privately — since the Jewish Theological Seminary was not granting a cantorial degree to women who had completed the full course of study at its College of Jewish Music — the same curriculum that was earning religious accreditation for its male cantorial graduates.

I invited everyone to my temple for a gathering. I put ads in *Moment*, *The Jewish Week* and other publications. In May of 1982 twelve women from all over came to Norwalk for our first meeting. We decided to call ourselves the Women Cantors' Network. I am enormously proud that our organization has grown to over 250 members. Still, I feel that even though the status of women has changed in the Reform and Conservative cantorate, there will always be a need for the WCN. We offer something very nurturing and caring that is not out there. We don't discriminate based on education, job experience, pulpit size, salary, ordination, certification or degrees. Because women were left out for so long in so many ways, we do not even discriminate based on gender! Being nurturing, caring, musical, spiritual and loving is not a female virtue alone.

It is therefore my prayer that our conferences keep on attracting cantors and hopeful cantors, writers, musicians, choir directors and rabbis — men as well as women — whose spirit is moved by our people's sacred music. Each one who attends brings a sense of beauty and kindness, an open heart and soul to share, and sometimes even a shoulder to cry on. I sincerely hope that the Women Cantors' Network can continue to be a beacon of light and hope, song and story, love and laughter for all of us.

Deborah Katchko Gray serves as hazzan at Reform Temple Shearith Israel of Ridgefield, Connecticut, and prides herself on working with a rabbi who "appreciates, enhances and elevates worship and constantly tells the congregation how lucky they are to receive beautiful and moving Jewish music on a weekly basis."

My Cantorate

By Anita F. Hochman

I knew I wanted to be a cantor from the time I attended junior high school. At the age of fourteen I had already reached several significant conclusions. I loved being Jewish. Music was central to my young being. My synagogue, Temple Shalom in Levittown, PA, was my second home. Everything felt right when I was there. And I was happiest singing Jewish music.

To me, this all added up quite tidily. I will be a cantor. Future decided.

That was in 1971. It didn't even occur to me that women cantors were an anomaly. Why did I even think this was an option for me? I certainly didn't know any women cantors. In fact, at fourteen I suspect I knew of only one. David Wisnia. My cantor. To this very moment in time I can hear his haunting *Kol Nidre* and his *R'tsei* that held me spellbound in a way I thought was other-worldly (even if I didn't yet know what that meant). But somehow I knew I didn't want to be a cantor like Cantor Wisnia. Still he remains for me today a deeply, powerfully moving inspiration. Was he a role model? I cannot say for sure. Just as I cannot say why, as a female 36 years ago, I thought I could (and was determined to) see myself as a cantor.

In just a few years time, leading songs at youth group and then camp would lead to my moniker: song leader. Every song from Debbie Friedman's *Sing Unto God* recording (vinyl!) was in my fingers and on my voice. My friend and song-leading partner, (now cantor) Leon Sher, and I would spend hours and hours together learning every chord, every note by ear and then by heart. We thirsted for this stuff. And little did we know that we were drinking in the first momentous drops of a tidal wave of Jewish music for worship and celebration.

All through my song-leading years I remained resolute in my desire to be a cantor, still with no women that I knew of to look to as examples. I created my own path back in the 70s. With song leading as my lifeline, and intensive study with remarkable teachers, I made my way through relatively uncharted territory. Twenty-five years ago at the age of 24 I auditioned for the job of full-time cantor at M'kor Shalom in Cherry Hill, NJ. I actually thought I was not quite ready for it at the time. But fortunately, the leadership saw the potential for growth in me that I was still incapable of seeing. And they wanted a cantor who could play guitar. Today it's not uncommon for a congregation to intentionally search for a candidate who plays guitar. In 1981 it was. But in 1981 it was also uncommon to find a congregation that was interested in

hiring a woman. So I went to work for this uncommon congregation. It was a place that preferred to think “outside the box” long before the phrase itself was coined. A maverick congregation in an area where the Jewish population was growing steadily hired this young woman who was determined to be more than an anomaly.

I continued to study. I was enrolled in what was then a fledgling graduate program at Gratz College in Philadelphia. With openhearted guides such as Shalom Altman (z”l), Dr. Irving Cohen (z”l), Hazzan Max Wohlberg (z”l), Hazzan Charles Davidson and Hazzan Dr. Saul P. Wachs, I immersed myself in modes, nusah, cantillation, liturgy and history. And, having grown up in a classical Reform congregation, for the first time in my life I learned what it means to daven. I explored various minyanim in and around my community. With my hard-earned confidence I proudly found myself davening comfortably with a traditional siddur in my hands, the appropriate nusah flowing from my lips, and my body moving comfortably through the time-honored choreography of many a traditional service.

But on Friday afternoon, the approach of Shabbat brought me home to what had always been most familiar; sitting quietly, tuning my guitar, singing a familiar or new tune that I would be teaching my congregation that evening. Only now it was as a cantor, not a songleader.

Within my first few years of serving M’kor Shalom I walked that challenging tightrope of singing what was most familiar to the congregation, yet finding a small opening for change and even musical correction to the parts of the service where nusah could find its rightful place. For instance, teachable moments within the service itself gave me the opportunity to explain that *Ve-ahavta* offers us its own implied means for chanting. For the first time the *ta’amei ha-Mikra* finally became the vehicle for our song. Our M’kor Shalom services have always reflected the blend of traditional and contemporary within the framework of our Reform awareness of making informed and educated choices. We may have been somewhat ahead of the curve 25 years ago. Services like ours were experienced at other congregations on the occasional Shabbat reserved for a youth group’s “creative” service. But my congregation had fashioned its own prayerbook, eschewing both *Union Prayer Book* and *Gates of Prayer* in favor of their own expansive and innovative text; affording us the option for creativity each and every Shabbat.

I took great pride during the early stages of my career (and still do, in fact) in being associated with this unconventional synagogue. The congregation itself became quickly identified as “that synagogue with the guitar-playing

female cantor.” To some this was a dubious distinction, to be sure. But more often it signified an identification not only apt, but celebrated. And it distinguished M’kor Shalom (as did a number of our other unique characteristics) as rare and intriguing.

What also set us apart at first was our participatory style of worship. My well-honed songleading skills have always served me well. And I’m quite aware that it’s those skills that made me the choice of an exhaustive cantorial search over 25 years ago. To this very day one of my greatest weekly joys comes in leading our Shabbat morning Junior Congregation service with our fifth and sixth graders. In many respects the sanctuary also becomes a classroom. We study the liturgy, explore the choreography of worship, engage in Torah, and we sing. We sing and clap ourselves awake each Saturday morning, a little groggy and timid at first. But by *Mi Khamokha* we’re swirling in a round of *shevalh*, even competing by grade to discover who can offer praises with more enthusiasm. And by the end of *Adon Olam* the kids have concluded a pep rally for God that is its own model for what really matters (in my mind) in joyful prayer.

I am most fulfilled professionally when I know I am enabling and empowering adults and children to celebrate Judaism and reach for the Divine with their own voices, their own hands and their own hearts. This is my cantorate. This is my calling.

Recently, with the loss of a dear friend’s father, I had occasion to hear my “own” cantor, David Wisnia, recite *Eil Malei Rahamim*.

It had been many, many years since I had seen or heard this extraordinary icon of my youth. With his very first notes and the cry from his East European *neshomeh*, I was immediately reduced to an emotional puddle. Sobbing welled up from within me as soon as I heard him begin. As often as music has brought me to tears and touched places within me that were as deep as I thought possible, hearing this man’s voice accessed a part of me that I didn’t even know was there. I honestly don’t have words to express how powerful that experience was. But in attempting to explain “my cantorate” for this celebratory issue of the Journal I have come to understand whence the call.

Editor’s Note: Cantor Hochman is too modest. I witnessed what she terms a “Junior Congregation service with our fifth and sixth graders” one Shabbat morning seventeen years ago while shul-hopping (an editor’s prerogative) during my year of mourning for my Dad. The only way I can describe what she did with those 200 unruly youngsters, their indifferent teachers and us half-dozen gawking Kaddish zogers was: “Group Magic.”

Breaking Past Barriers and Looking Ahead

by Marla Rosenfeld Barugel

My path to the Cantorate was a circuitous one, winding from foreign-language teaching to international banking and finally to Cantorial School. My goal was to combine teaching with languages with the desire to study Jewish music in a formalized manner.

When I first entered the Jewish Theological Seminary, although women were taking the same fourteen courses a semester in Music and Judaica as men, they were eligible only for the Bachelor of Sacred Music degree and not the diploma of Hazzan. While men were students in both the Cantors Institute and the Seminary College of Jewish Music, women were students only in the latter. The women worked very hard during the course of four years (now it is a five year program and students must go to Israel in the first year) to prove that we were just as — or more — competent than the men.

We women began petitioning Chancellor Gerson Cohen in 1986 soon after Amy Eilberg, the first Conservative woman Rabbi, was ordained. A legal responsum by Rabbi Joel Roth served as the basis for our petition. It stated that women who accept the full obligations of the time-bound positive commandments like praying three times a day, putting on Tallit and Tefillin, hearing the Shofar blasts and the Megillah reading, shaking the Lulav, etc. — obligations which traditionally fell only upon men — are eligible to represent others in communal prayer. This acceptance of time-bound religious obligations is called *hiyyuv*, and Rabbi Roth's responsum on it did not immediately extend to women cantors.

After Chancellor Cohen's untimely death towards the end of my third year in cantorial school, we circulated petitions signed by our male cantorial and rabbinic colleagues. One rabbi, Rabbi Bradley Artson Shavit, was particularly supportive.

In the beginning of my fourth year we met with the new chancellor, Ismar Schorsch. We argued that our not being granted the diploma of Hazzan — in the face of the Roth responsum and our assumption of *hiyyuv* obligations — was a “schizophrenic policy.” Why shouldn't the same ruling on leading public prayer apply to women cantorial students as well as women rabbinical students, especially since we were being trained to perform that specific religious function? Chancellor Schorsch agreed, and in February 1987 we received word that my classmate Erica Lippitz and I would be the first two women to receive the diploma of Hazzan.

In May of 1990 several colleagues and I co-founded the Cantors Institute Alumni Association (CIAA) in reaction to the Cantors Assembly vote earlier that month to reject women members. I believe that the formation of our Alumni Association was crucial in the Assembly's coming to terms with this issue. On August 30th the Executive Council of the Cantors Assembly effectively overrode the general membership's extremely close vote by overwhelmingly passing a resolution (29-1) "admitting qualified women Cantors as full-fledged members of our organization."

At the 1991 convention in Los Angeles, fourteen women were voted in by the entire membership. Included in that group were Cantors Elaine Shapiro and Linda Shivers who had graduated from the Seminary College of Jewish Music before Rikki Lippitz and myself. All of us broke into a chorus of "Siman Tov u-Mazal Tov" and tears of joy accompanied our singing as we finally claimed our rightful place in the folds of our professional organization.

I suppose that we who were among the first women graduates of the Cantorial School at the Jewish Theological Seminary have become the role models for those who followed us. I know for a fact that I have been a role model to my young Bat Mitzvah students — and perhaps beyond. My own son said to me a few years ago: "But Mom, I thought only women were Cantors." His best friend's mom is also a Cantor.

After working as a professional cantor for two decades, I would like to propose that the Cantors Assembly fund a recording of its women members in honor of the 20th year of their official investiture as cantors.

Marla Rosenfeld Barugel is just entering her twenty-first year as hazzan at Congregation B'nai Israel of Rumson, New Jersey. She would like to acknowledge her early mentors Rabbi Jeremiah Wohlberg and Cantor Jonah Binder, as well as her professional colleagues Cantor Faith Steinsnyder, Rabbi Jack Rosoff and Dr. Barbara Rosoff, who continue to inspire her work as a cantor and educator.

JTS Approves Women to Be Cantors

by Walter Ruby

Dr. Ismar Schorsch, chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, announced yesterday that JTS will henceforth award full cantorial status to women graduates of The Cantors Institute. Scheduled to complete the Cantors Institute program at the end of this academic year are Marla Barugel and Erica Lippitz. They will be awarded the diploma of hazzan at JTS graduation ceremonies in May. Until now, women who completed the five-year program at the Institute were eligible only to receive an academic degree of Bachelor of Sacred Music, while male graduates were eligible to receive both the academic degree and the hazzan's diploma.

The long-awaited decision by JTS, to ordain women as cantors, is likely to mark a major controversy within the Conservative movement, which is still sorely divided by its 1983 decision to ordain women rabbis, and the subsequent decision by the Rabbinical Assembly to accept women as congregational rabbis.

Rabbi Ronald Price, executive director of the Union for Traditional Conservative Judaism, warned last November, "For the Seminary to ordain women as cantors would be a serious mistake as well as a more serious violation of Jewish law than ordaining women as rabbis. From a halakhic perspective, leading the prayer service is more crucial than teaching."

However, according to Schorsch, "This decision is really a continuation of the decision taken in 1983 [to ordain women rabbis]. What I have done now is merely to apply the decision of 1983 to the Cantors' Institute." Schorsch explained that both decisions were based on a responsum from the early 1970s by Conservative halakhist, Rabbi Joel Roth, providing halakhic acceptance for women who voluntarily take on the time-honored obligations of traditional Judaism, such as the wearing of tallit and tefillin and going to three minyanim each day.

Schorsch argued, "On the basis of the responsum by Professor Roth, there is no difference [between ordaining women as rabbis and as cantors]. It is really a problem of responsibility commensurate with obligation." Schorsch acknowledged that both decisions are "major departures from previous practice," but contended that "the role of women in religious life in Judaism has been an issue for 200 years. The opening of positions of religious leadership is merely the completion of a process of equalization that began some 200 years ago with emancipation."

Schorsch said he believed JTS ought to have decided to ordain women as cantors at the time it allowed women to be ordained as rabbis. “This decision is part of what we should have done in 1983,” he said. “No one was served well by ignoring the fact that we didn’t complete the process in 1983.” He said that “a major impediment was resolved” when a delegation of cantorial students, both male and female, met with him at the beginning of this academic year to urge acceptance of women as cantors.

According to Schorsch, the female cantorial students made clear at that meeting that “they had no problem complying with the requirements of the Roth *teshuvah* (responsum) to begin with.” Schorsch said that in the intervening month, he has held extensive consultations with members of the JTS faculty and leaders of the broader Conservative movement.

Schorsch said he planned to meet with the leadership of the Union for Traditional Conservative Judaism this week to discuss the decision. He acknowledged, “I don’t have any illusions on being able to persuade [the UTCJ], but it is my contention that this decision is a halakhic one based on a balanced halakhic *teshuvah*. People may disagree with the bottom line of this *teshuvah*, but in the course of Jewish history very few responsa have ever instantaneously won the unanimous approval of the Jewish people.”

Schorsch emphasized, “I think there is broad support in the Conservative movement [for the ordination of women cantors]. There is plenty of room for disagreement and diversity within the Conservative movement, but I think we are moving in the direction of the popular will within the movement.”

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The Admission of Women into the Cantors Assembly

by Samuel Rosenbaum and Stephen J. Stein

In May 1987, Marla Barugel and Erica Lippitz became the first women to graduate from the Jewish Theological Seminary with the diploma of hazzan. An announcement of the Seminary's decision had been made several months earlier by the Chancellor.

The question of women as *shlihei tsibbur* was first raised within the Assembly in the late 1970s when it was reported that a few Conservative congregations had engaged women to serve as their cantors. It was during this time that Dr. Gerson Cohen, then chancellor of the Seminary, appointed a commission to study the question of ordination of women as rabbis. Since, at that point, this commission had yet to render a decision regarding women as rabbinical students, the Cantors Assembly decided that it was premature to take a public position on women in the cantorate.

In 1980, concern was expressed by colleagues on the West Coast about the proliferation of inadequately trained men and women who were being called to serve as cantors in Conservative as well as Reform congregations. The question arose as to whether it was ethically proper for a member of the Assembly to prepare women for such a career. Although the Conservative movement had not yet paved the way for women to serve as *shlihei tsibbur*, it was the general feeling that our by-laws made no restriction against such instruction. The Executive Council urged those who chose to teach both men and women, to see to it that all be trained in a manner that enabled them to serve properly.

In the spring of 1981, discussion pertaining to women in the cantorate intensified as speculation increased that the Seminary would soon ordain women as rabbis. It was clear that the issue, for our membership, was a sensitive one and that feelings on both sides of the question were strong. Jack Chomsky, then a student at the Cantors Institute, was asked to poll the membership of the Cantors Assembly. His survey found, at that point in our history, that the membership was split right down the middle, with a slight edge in favor of conferring equal status of women. Most of those who opposed the ordination of women as cantors, however, saw the trend as inevitable. What Hazzan Chomsky also discovered was that, for the first time in the history of the Cantors Assembly, an issue that was both halakhic and political threatened the unity of the organization.

At the Executive Council meeting of September 1, 1981, Hazzan Max Wohlberg presented a comprehensive report dealing with both sides of the question. By the end of his presentation, it was evident that almost all of those present felt that the inclusion of women in the Cantorate was sure to occur, sooner or later. It was also the consensus that, *halakhically* speaking, there was no serious hindrance that could not be overcome much in the way that *halakhah* over the centuries had circumvented those laws which were either impossible to perform or which the people, for reasons valid at the time, would not or could not obey. Nevertheless, there was unanimous agreement that since there had not yet been any serious discussion in the Rabbinical Assembly or at the Seminary about permitting women to serve as cantors, it would be prudent for the Assembly to hold off any pronouncements on the subject.

With the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary voting on October 23, 1983 to accept women as rabbinical students, the question of women in the cantorate again became the focus of discussion in the Cantors Assembly. The Seminary, however, still was unprepared to consider the question of women as *shlihei tsibbur*. The consensus of the Assembly therefore remained that until such time as the Seminary dealt with the issue, the Assembly had no choice but to maintain the status quo. To open membership to women at that point, would have put the CA at odds with the Seminary.

In the fall of 1984 The Jewish Theological Seminary decided to establish an alternative weekday and Shabbat service in which women would be permitted to participate on every level equally with men. The only caveat was that women who wished to serve as *ba'aley tefillah* and *ba'aley k'riah* would have to commit to accepting those mitzvot known as *hiyyuv*, which are obligatorily performed at specific times.

During the next three years the topic of women in the cantorate continued to be frequently discussed while the Cantors Assembly waited to see if and when the Seminary would change its policy.

At the Executive Council meeting of March 31, 1987, the first to be held after the Seminary's decision to grant Marla and Erica the diploma of hazzan, extensive discussion took place on the subject. Opinions both in favor of and opposed to the Seminary's decision were articulated. As the discussion progressed it was clear that several questions were in need of answering: (1) What did the chancellor propose to do for women graduates of the Cantors Institute from previous years who had the technical knowledge but who had not been asked to accept *hiyyuv*? (2) Did this decision include all future women graduates of the Cantors Institute, or only those two individuals? (3)

The Cantors Assembly has accepted male graduates of Hebrew Union College almost as freely as it has accepted graduates of the Seminary. How would the CA deal with women who graduated from the cantorial School at HUC, in regard to *hiyyuv*? The minutes of that meeting also reflected, on the one hand, a hesitation to set aside a long-held tradition of allowing only men to serve as cantors and, on the other hand, a realization that opening our doors to women would help to alleviate the acute shortage of bona fide cantors.

At the conclusion of the discussion, President Saul Hammerman designated a special fact-finding committee to explore all of the ramifications of Chancellor Schorsch's decision. Serving on that committee were Hazzanim Saul Hammerman, Solomon Mendelson, Robert Kieval, Henry Rosenblum, Samuel Rosenbaum, Abraham Lubin, A. Eliezer Kirshblum, Morton Shames, Isaac Wall and Max Wohlberg. By the end of August the committee had already met three times for internal discussion and had interviewed Dr. Schorsch, Rabbi Ronald Price and Dr. Simon Greenberg. The committee had also arranged to meet with Rabbis Irving Greenberg, Kassel Abelson and Dr. Joel Roth.

At the March 22, 1988 meeting of the Executive Council it was decided that a two-thirds majority of those present and entitled to vote would determine whether women would be admitted to membership. All day Tuesday of the annual convention would be devoted to a discussion and vote on the issue. It was anticipated that the vote would be close.

The motion to admit women into the ranks of the Cantors Assembly was brought before the membership at the 1988 annual meeting, held during the convention, and was defeated. The next step was to place the question before the Law Committee of the Rabbinical Assembly.

By the fall of 1988, Dr. Joel Roth, Chairman of the Law Committee, reported back to the Assembly. He pointed out that the Law Committee had voted in August 1972, that on the issue of women counting in the minyan, both the "yes" and "no" positions (majority and minority opinions) were valid within Conservative Halakhah. Additionally, in June 1974, the Law Committee voted to validate both the pro and con positions concerning whether women may serve as rabbis and cantors. The committee decided again that both positions were valid within the Conservative movement. Finally, the Law Committee had decided that nothing was to be gained by reopening these issues, particularly in consideration of the strong emotions known to exist on both sides of the question.

In his response to the Assembly, Dr. Roth also wrote the following.

If the membership of the Cantors Assembly rejected women from membership on the sole grounds that the Law Committee had never voted to allow them to become Cantors, they were in error. And if they rejected women from membership because only a minority of the Committee voted to permit them to become cantors, the CA did not understand the policy of the Law Committee regarding the status of minority and majority positions. Within the last year or two, the Law Committee has consciously decided not to vote again on the issues of women in the minyan or in the rabbinate or cantorate. Since all positions had already been validated by it, and since new specific views had been published in the faculty papers, and since the Movement was divided, the Committee felt that nothing was to be gained by reopening the issues. Underlying this feeling was the Committee's knowledge that since minority opinions are every bit as acceptable as majority positions a new vote would not likely change anything substantively, and would, to the contrary, be likely to exacerbate tensions.

The Commission appointed by President Hammerman was now of the unanimous opinion that it had gathered all of the pertinent information relative to this subject and had therefore completed its assignment. It was decided that a vote would once again be taken during the convention's annual meeting, without additional argumentation or discussion from the floor. As was stipulated for the last vote, a clear mandate — a two-thirds majority — would be required to admit women to membership.

The vote on the question of admitting women to membership was taken at the annual meeting on May 16, 1989. Fifty-six percent of those voting endorsed the motion. While the majority vote in favor of admitting women reflected a change in mood and attitude from the previous year, it still did not comprise the two-thirds vote required by the mandate of the Executive Council. It was clear that the issue could not be allowed to drag on for another year without an attempt to reach a compromise solution. A new committee was formed, comprised of vocal advocates on both sides of the question. Appointed to that committee by newly elected president Robert Kieval were colleagues A. Eliezer Kirshblum, Paul Kowarsky, Jeffrey Shapiro, Jack Chomsky, Henry Rosenblum and David Tilman.

The six met in late August, one day prior to a scheduled Executive Council meeting. After several hours of non-stop discussion, the following compromise proposal was unanimously agreed upon.

- 1) Women graduates of the Cantors Institute would be admitted to membership in the Cantors Assembly at the next convention after a vote of the membership requiring a two-thirds majority.

- 2) Simultaneously, by a two-thirds majority vote, a rule would be adopted whereby religious services during the conventions would be conducted as they had until then, in a traditional manner. Only men would be permitted to serve as *shlihei tsibbur*, read Torah, count to the minyan, be called to the Torah, lead *Birkat HaMazon* and *HaMotsi*, chant *S'firat Ha'Omer* and function as gabbai. Women would be permitted to perform in all concerts including those of *hazzanut*, be listed in the program as *hazzan*, lead Havah Nashir community singing at meals, present academic papers and participate in all educational, professional and business meetings.
- 3) At the convention of 1994, a vote would be taken as to whether the conditions in paragraph two would be revoked or amended. Once again, a two-thirds majority would be required to implement any changes in paragraph two.

Additionally, the Executive Council voted to ban all written electioneering or mass mailings by either side before or during the convention.

At the annual convention of 1990 a third vote was taken on the question of admitting women to membership in the Cantors Assembly. While again, as in the previous year, most members voted in favor of the motion, the two-thirds majority that was required fell slightly short. It was clear to the leadership of the Cantors Assembly, particularly its president, Robert Kieval, that a new approach had to be found to resolving this issue. In recognition of the realities that women were graduating from the Cantors Institute as bona fide *hazzanim*, that their admission into the Cantors Assembly was inevitable and that the viability of the Cantors Assembly could no longer afford for the organization to continue to devote so much time and effort to this matter, the leadership turned again to its legal counsel.

After consulting with our attorneys and several other legal firms and consultants, the officers reported the following to the Executive Council in the meeting of August 1990:

The By-Laws of the Assembly are silent on the question of the gender of those to be admitted to membership and do not in any way restrict membership to males only.... Furthermore, in the opinion of all legal counsel, the Executive Council is the final authority in matters of qualification and acceptance or rejection of candidates for membership. The Council has the authority to formulate additional standards or to delete or amend existing qualifications.

Legal counsel pointed out that in the case of the vote of the membership that took place at the last three conventions, it was the Executive Council who set the two-thirds requirement for passage of the resolution on whether or not to admit women. Such a plurality is not required by our By-Laws in deciding the outcome of a resolution. A simple majority is all that is required.

The purpose of submitting those resolutions and the plurality required was a result of a policy decision of the Executive Council. It is the opinion of the lawyers that since the Executive Council has the undisputed authority to make or change policy on membership requirements, it can decide that it need not submit the question of the admission of women to a convention.

While the membership has observed a “tradition” of denying membership to women, the Executive Council can decide that in view of the Conservative movement’s approval of the admission of women to the rabbinate, and the policy of granting the degree of *hazzan* to women graduates of the Cantors Institute, and the overwhelmingly large number of Conservative congregations who are granting equal religious rights to women, that this “tradition” is now subject to change.

After all who had asked to speak had been heard, the question was called. The resolution passed by a vote of twenty-nine in favor of it and one opposed. There were two abstentions. The President declared that the resolution had been carried and that properly qualified women would be admitted to membership in the same manner as qualified men.

Samuel Rosenbaum (1920-1997) was hazzan at Temple Beth El of Rochester, New York from 1946 until 1987. He served the Cantors Assembly as president, and then as executive vice-president for almost forty years. An outstanding poet, he excelled at writing texts for musical works presented on radio and television, and in translating Yiddish folk songs.

Stephen J. Stein, who is hazzan at Beth El Congregation in Akron, Ohio and who also served the Cantors Assembly as its president, succeeded Samuel Rosenbaum as Executive Vice-President in 1999.

This article is reprinted from their collaborative chronicle, “The Second Twenty-Five Years: 1973-1977, Cantors Assembly Jubilee Journal, Jack Chomsky and Solomon Mendelson, editors (New York: Cantors Assembly), 1998: 368-371.

Women in the Minyan and as Shelihot Tsibbur

by the *Va'ad Halakhah of the Rabbinical Assembly of Israel*¹

Question:

Are women required to recite the amidah three times a day? Are they required to recite Musaf and N'ilah? Is it permissible to count them in the minyan for Bar'khu, Kaddish, and the repetition of the Amidah? May they serve as cantor for Shaḥarit, Minḥah, Ma'ariv, Musaf, and N'ilah?

Responsum:

According to the Mishnah (*B'rakhot* 3:3), women are required to recite the t'fillah, and t'fillah in the Mishnah does not mean "prayer" but rather the Amidah or the eighteen benedictions. The discussion of this Mishnah in the Bavli (20b) has been preserved in three different versions and the Rishonim ruled according to the text that they had in front of them. The Rif, Maimonides and others ruled that tefillah was originally a positive commandment for men and women without a fixed time or text; when Ezra and his court enacted fixed times and texts, men and women were obligated equally. Halakhot G'dolot, Rashi and Ramban ruled that t'fillah was originally a rabbinic enactment, which applied equally to men and women since t'fillah involves asking God for mercy. In any case, according to the Mishnah, the Bavli in all of its versions and the Rishonim cited in the responsum, women are required to recite the Amidah three times a day exactly like men. Furthermore, there are many testimonies from the Talmudic period until the eighteenth century which prove that women actually prayed every day and even three times a day at home or in the synagogue just like men.

There is a disagreement among the Aharonim as to whether women are required to recite Musaf, but the proofs adduced by both sides are not very convincing. In such a case, it is preferable to rely on the early sources and, according to the plain meaning of the Mishnah and the Rambam, women are required to recite Musaf and N'ilah just as they are required to recite Shaḥarit, Minḥah and Ma'ariv.

Barekhu, Kaddish and the loud repetition of the Amidah are usually called *d'varim shebi-k'dushah* and many authorities forbid women from being counted in the minyan for these prayers. On the contrary, a careful reading of the Talmud and the Rambam reveals that it is permissible to count women in the minyan for these prayers. The Talmud derives the need for a minyan

1 *T'shuvot l'-Yameinu*, vol. 6 (1995-1998), 4th Responsum.

for certain ceremonies from a d'rashah found in *Megillah* 23b (also *B'rakhot* 21b). The very same d'rashah appears word for word in *Sanhedrin* 74b as an *asmakhta* for sanctifying God's name in the presence of a minyan. The latter passage in the Talmud assumes that Esther and other women are required to sanctify God's name in the presence of ten Jews, and this was codified by the major codes of Jewish law. Furthermore, a number of authorities ruled that women may even be counted in the minyan required for the sanctification of God's name. It is clear from the identical d'rashot adduced in these two passages that *d'varim shebi-k'dushah* and *kiddush ha-shem* are two sides of the same coin, since they both stem from the desire to sanctify God's name in public. Therefore, if it is permissible to count women in the minyan for *kiddush ha-shem*, they can be counted in the minyan for Bar'khu, Kaddish and K'dushah as well.

Finally, there is a basic principle that whoever is obligated to do something, may fulfill the obligation of the congregation (*Mishnah Rosh HaShanah* 3: 8). We have proved above that women are required to recite the amidah in every prayer service and that they are required to sanctify God's name in public. As a result, it is permissible for them to act as cantor for all of the parts of the service under discussion.

Rabbi David Golinkin

In favor: Rabbi Michael Graetz

Rabbi Gilah Dror

Rabbi David Frankel

Rabbi David Lazar

Rabbi Simchah Roth

Opposed: Rabbi Yisrael Warman

A Conservative Woman Cantor Speaks Out¹

by Janet Roth Krupnik

It's highly gratifying for me to chair this symposium on issues that are important to us as women cantors; we hope and pray it will be duplicated every year at Cantors Assembly conventions. From the responses that many of you sent to my questionnaire, I've compiled a wish list of topics for discussion, now and in the future. Please bear with me if I exercise my prerogative as chair and paraphrase some of your words rather than quote them directly. Also, because the majority of your suggestions showed up in multiple responses, I will not attribute any of them to specific individuals.

First and foremost on all of our minds — although you state it in different ways — is the question of how women might gain respect as cantors. Someone cited *Hin'ni He'ani mi-Ma'as* the cantor's self-referent prayer that opens the Musaf service on *Yamim Nora'im*.

Here I stand, deficient in deeds and awed by You,
Yet I dare to plead on behalf of Your people.

The text petitions that the hazzan's prayers be worthy, as if he were an "experienced elder, whose lifetime has been well spent and whose beard is fully grown." As women cantors we have to ask ourselves: what in the female lexicon of metaphors could we possibly substitute that would command the same reverence as that patriarchal male image? A few of you have jokingly replaced the phrase *uz'kano mgudal* with its feminist flip side, *shaddayim nakhonu*, after the prophet Ezekiel's description of a Jerusalem that had grown exceedingly beautiful, with "firm breasts and luxuriant hair" (16: 7).

But seriously, the fact remains that external considerations like physical appearance and dress (always a factor when women appear in public roles) have currently assumed primacy of place, at the expense of values which formerly defined the cantorate. Judaic knowledge and vocal prowess are no longer viewed as decisive qualities for female — or even male — cantors. The bottom line: like it or not, we're in the same boat as our superstar male counterparts in trying to reclaim the dignity and respect due our sacred calling.

Secondly — and it's only natural, considering that almost all of us are still within our childbearing years — we share the desire to see a standard provision added to cantorial and rabbinic contracts, that would grant us maternity

1 This session took place at the 54th Annual Convention of the Cantors Assembly (Ellenville, New York: Nevele Grande Resort), May 6-10, 2001.

leave. To start that ball rolling we would need an official statement from both the CA and the Rabbinical Assembly, addressing paternity — as well as maternity — leave. Many of you would also like to see provision made for flextime, and consideration of the physical problems entailed by singing or fasting during pregnancy (not to mention falling on one's face during the High Holiday Aleinu and Avodah).

For any of these changes to take place we would have to invite our male colleagues — especially our elected officers — to attend our sessions, to sit on our panels and to participate fully in our discussions. How are we ever going to raise their consciousness if we keep discussions like this one off-limits to men?

Having said that, I must add that there was also a consensus among you on the need for women cantors to network on their own. This could be done through an e-mail list accessible only to those of us who subscribe to it, in addition to our own convention sessions. It would enable us to reach out to one another, to create what many of you have called a Community of Kindness within the larger organization, one that would lead the way in valuing all its members as colleagues.

Here are some suggested projects that such a caring community might undertake: commissioning or adapting traditional recitatives for our voices; mentoring younger colleagues, particularly first timers; inviting each other to appear as featured soloists at regional concerts; and organizing a children's choir to sing synagogue repertoire at conventions — an experience that many of us missed out on when we were growing up.

That last item leads me to a number of other ideas you have spelled out for future convention planners to implement.

- Give more than one choice when scheduling educational sessions, even if it means reducing the number of concerts. For example, it would enable people to attend both the chaplaincy and the conducting workshops if those sessions were not run concurrently.
- Invite more women presenters.
- Schedule a women's lunch-table discussion.
- Schedule women's coaching sessions.
- Gear some of the programming to new cantors.
- Make the programming more interactive, less frontal.
- Schedule more continuing education sessions.

- Offer workshops in professional skills such as administration, public relations and marketing.
- Offer sessions on improving cantor/rabbi communication.

Finally, almost all of you expressed a desire for more recognition within the CA itself, possibly by means of a concert, a recording or a publication. At the 10th anniversary of women being accepted into the CA, wasn't there even one woman deserving of an award? As chair, I feel obligated to play devil's advocate by countering these legitimate questions with several of my own. First, have we ever stopped to ask ourselves what *we* can do for the CA? Up until now the CA has not been able to persuade capable women cantors to assume positions of responsibility within the organization. While some of us have served on the Executive Council, as a group we have refused to chair any committee, agreeing only to co-chair Planning for a few recent conventions and steadfastly avoiding the nitty-gritty of Management.

Our women members need to know that before there can be women officers, there must be women who are willing and able to assume the same responsibilities that their male colleagues have assumed on their way to higher office. Women with small children (many of us) are the least likely to volunteer away any more of their precious time with their families than is absolutely necessary for their work. But they could still share ideas via the Internet, as mentioned earlier, and they could still recruit other women who do have the time and the energy demanded by chairing a committee.

I'll close on that upbeat note, thanks for your attention, and above all for your thoughtful input.

Janet Roth Krupnik is hazzan at the Summit Jewish Community Center in Summit, New Jersey.



The Khazntes—The Life Stories of Sophie Kurtzer, Bas Sheva, Sheindele the Khaznte, Perele Feig, Goldie Malavsky, and Fraydele Oysher

by *Arianne Brown*

Introduction

Long before women could even dream of the actuality of becoming cantors, long before the cantorial schools of any denomination even considered accepting women, long before women's voices were heard on a bimah, there were a few special women who challenged the confines of tradition and dared to dream.

Jewish tradition silenced the voices of many women — women who may have been able to use their voices within the parameters of Judaism to sing to God, to inspire others and to uplift the spirits of their people. Due to social confines and issues of *kol ishah* — the rabbinic notion that a woman's voice can be seductive and thus should not be heard — women were not encouraged to sing in public. Young Jewish boys learned how to daven and read Torah. They were encouraged to use their voices to express their religious feelings. Young girls did not receive the same encouragement or education. They often learned Yiddish folk songs from their mothers and were familiar with the prayer services and Sabbath-table *zemirots* that they heard frequently, yet they remained quiet. One only has to walk into one of many synagogues today in which there is separate seating to observe the phenomenon of fervent prayer on the men's side in the form of lively singing, and equally fervent prayer on the women's side — escaping from closed lips that barely make a sound. Both types of prayer can be valid and beautiful. What happens, however, when the silent plea is not enough and a woman needs to express herself through singing?

There is no proper term to describe the women who will be discussed in this article. They were not cantors, for they were not formally allowed to lead congregations in prayer, yet their heartfelt renditions of prayers undoubtedly caused their audiences to experience emotion and to pray. Many of them were called "khazntes." The Yiddish feminine ending for the Hebrew term *hazzan*

(cantor) literally refers to a cantor's wife. Yet when used in conjunction with these women's names, it was understood to mean a female cantor or a woman who sang cantorial music.

What caused these six women to rise to fame in a field occupied only by men? Surely there had to have been other women who attempted to sing hazzanut. What was it about these six women that allowed them to break through the barrier of gender associated with cantorial music?

There are four common denominators among the six khazntes. The first is their immersion in a world of Jewish culture and hazzanut. Each of the six women came from a musical family. Sophie Kurtzer's father and husband were both cantors. Bernice Kanefsky (Bas Sheva) and Goldie Malavsky were daughters of cantors as well. Jean Gornish (Sheindele) was from a musically talented family. Both she and Goldie Malavsky had their first singing experiences around the Shabbat table. Both women's brothers describe the wonderful harmonies their families would create around the Shabbat table as neighbors came and sat by the windows to listen. Perele's father was a lay *baal tefillah*, and her brother was a synagogue choir director. Fraydele Oysher was a descendant of seven generations of cantors and the sister of the famous cantor Moishe Oysher (1907-1958). Each of these women was deeply immersed from her earliest days in a world of hazzanut.

The second common denominator among these women is their vocal talent. While there were other women who attempted to sing cantorial music, these women had the talent required to perform it successfully. Furthermore, they shared similar vocal qualities. The khazntes all sang in a low chest register. They listened to recordings of famous cantors and tried to imitate them, pushing their alto voices as low as they could possibly go. Sophie and Sheindele sang in contralto keys with a quality that could cause confusion about whether the singer was male or female. Perele Feig, whose voice actually sounded like that of a man, was the khaznte who remained closest to the male cantors. Goldie Malavsky sounded like a boy alto. Bas Sheva's and Fraydele's voices were clearly female, though they almost never made use of their head register and instead carried their low chest register as high as it could possibly go. Most people were not ready to accept women singing hazzanut, even outside the context of the synagogue. However, if the women sounded like men, there might have been an aspect of psychological comfort that allowed greater acceptance than would have been the case with the soprano voice.

The third common characteristic among these women is their possession of strong personalities and progressive attitudes. They all had to advocate for themselves in order to advance their careers. They were famous because they

were novelty acts. Yet, had they been male, they would not have had to fight for their right to sing hazzanut. Perele Feig was able to seek fame as a singer of hazzanut while living among traditional Jews and maintaining her Orthodox lifestyle. Sheindele, as a teenager, bypassed her parents' strong feelings against her singing hazzanut while not availing herself of opportunities to become a popular singer. Singing songs was insufficient; only hazzanut satisfied her soul. Fraydele moved away from her parents at the age of fifteen and came to New York to pursue a singing career. Because there were no Yiddish shows that featured a khaznte in the lead role, she had Yiddish playwrights and songwriters create shows for her, providing her with the opportunity to sing hazzanut on the Yiddish stage.

Finally, each of these six women had a deep love and passion for hazzanut. This love steered their hearts and their lives in an unusual direction. Their contributions to the world of Jewish music are immeasurable, for they created deep impressions upon all who heard them, and certainly caused many people to think about the role of women's voices in Jewish music. The khazntes' prayers were not silent; rather, they were broadcast, recorded, and preserved for future generations. Their stories and their voices deserve to be heard.

Lady Cantor Madam Sophie Kurtzer (1896-1974)

To begin listening to this recording without prior knowledge of who is performing can be an unsettling experience. The voice is uncanny; it is not quite feminine, nor is it masculine. The image that comes to mind is that of an unusually robust boy alto on the verge of a voice change. It is a sound apparently cultivated through direct imitation of cantors.

The *Chicago Daily Tribune* of April 25, 1921 tells an interesting story involving Sophie Kurtzer. The headline reads: "Concert Fund, Manager Flit, Crowd Riots — Artists, Unpaid, Refuse to Give Program." The article tells of a concert about to begin when it was suddenly discovered that the concert's promoter had walked away with the concert proceeds. Upon hearing the news, the artists — Sophie Kurtzer, advertised as "the only woman cantor in the world," and Piastor Borissoff, a Russian violinist — refused to perform until they were paid what they had been promised, despite the two thousand people who were crowded into Carmen's Hall.

The crowd clamored for the concert to start. After some pleading, the artists agreed to perform part of their program. Despite Sophie Kurtzer's singing of "a number of Hebrew hymns" and Borissoff's violin playing, some audience

1 Weiss, Samuel, liner notes to *Mysteries of the Sabbath* (Yazoo, 1994).

members still felt they had not received their money's worth. The story ends with a police search for the culprit.

We learn several things from this incident. First of all, Sophie Kurtzer, along with one other performer, was able to attract two thousand people to the concert. Although she was only twenty-four years old at the time, and had not yet released her recordings, she must have already made a name for herself. How she accomplished this is a mystery. There is no evidence of Sophie singing on the radio, and even if she had, no national radio network existed at the time.

While the amount of discovered information about Sophie Kurtzer is not great, her voice has been preserved on three modern recordings. The first is called *Di Eybike Mame: Women in Yiddish Theater and Popular Song, 1905 — 1929*, released in 2003 by Wergo Records. Listed as “Lady Cantor Madam Sophie Kurtzer (*Adesser Khaznte*, Cantor from Odessa),” Sophie’s *Kiddush for Shabbat evening* is included in this compilation. The same piece is included in a CD entitled *Mysteries of the Sabbath — Classic Cantorial Recordings: 1907-1947* produced by Henry Sapoznik and Richard Nevins on the Yazoo label in 1994. Sophie is the only woman included among cantorial Master’s such as Yossele Rosenblatt, Gershon Sirota, Zavel Kwartin and David Roitman. The last of the three modern recordings that include Sophie Kurtzer’s *Kiddush* is a new 2005 release by Tara Music entitled *Great Cantorial Singers: Masterpieces of the Synagogue*, which also features the voices of Bas Sheva, Sheindele, Perele Feig, and Fraydele Oysher.

It is not apparent whether or not Sophie Kurtzer was aware of how monumental her recordings were. While the other khazntes sought fame continually, Sophie did not pursue singing in the later years of her life. Perhaps the greatest impact she made during her lifetime was on her niece, Bernice Kanefsky, who would later rise to fame as “Bas Sheva”.

Bas Sheva — Soul of a People (1925-1960)

Just a few years ago the entire musical world was saddened by the untimely death of Bas Sheva, the lovely young Pennsylvania-born singer whose magnificent voice had electrified theater and concert audiences across the country. The daughter of a cantor and concert singer, she sang the ancient Hebraic chants with a remarkable degree of authenticity and emotional expression, though as a woman, she was ineligible for the cantorial calling herself. This re-issue of her original Capitol album contains six prayers as they might have been sung in some little East European synagogue, or

its counterpart in one of the great American cities where immigrant Jews settled.²

Bas Sheva became the lead singer in her husband Al Hausman's band, and together they performed at weddings and became popular in the "Borscht Belt" circuit of Catskills resort hotels: Youngs Gap, Gilberts, Pines, the Concord, and many others. The general layout of a Catskills hotel show would consist of a singer who performed a forty-five minute set, followed by a comedian who entertained for an hour.

Stylistically, Bas Sheva was a Catskills pop singer, molded in the style of Judy Garland, who had something extra special. **Example 1.** shows a publicity photo of Bas Sheva at the outset of her career. She would sing popular songs including *Rock a Bye Your Baby With a Dixie Melody* and *Flying Purple People Eater*. In the middle of her set, the lights would dim, a drum roll was heard, and Bas Sheva would put on a lace head covering before singing a big cantorial number. This unique versatility was what set her apart from other female singers.



Example 1. *Publicity photo of Bas Sheva at the outset of her career.*

The audiences reacted most strongly to Bas Sheva's singing of hazzanut. Only ten years had passed since the end of World War II, and many a Holocaust survivor in the Catskills crowds broke out in tears at Bas Sheva's cantorial

2 Liner notes to *Soul of a People*.

renditions. It is reported that the comedians could not get a laugh out of the audience after Bas Sheva sang!

Mark Hausman, the only child of Bas Sheva and Al Hausman, has childhood memories of his parents renting a bungalow in the Catskills. Summertime was especially prosperous for the Hausmans, with Bas Sheva and Al being sought after by hundreds of hotels and bungalow colonies.³

Newspaper ads and reviews found in the *Miami Herald*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and even the *Christian Science Monitor* provide us with a tableau of highlights from Bas Sheva's career.

She appeared in a 1949 film called *Catskill Honeymoon* that was made as an advertisement for the Youngs Gap Hotel. The video of it, still available for purchase from the National Center for Jewish Film at Brandeis University, features a variety of acts in a Catskill revue show, starring popular singers, actors and comedians. Bas Sheva is introduced as "a female cantor — a khaznte." She appears in a big fancy white dress with sparkling earrings and a lace *kippah*. A beautiful girl with dark hair and complete command of the stage, Bas Sheva sings Israel Schorr's famous *Sheyiboneh Beis HaMikdosh* with a deep, rich tone. She uses chest voice, and the cantorial *dreydlekh* (stylistic vocal turns in Eastern European *hazzanut*) flow effortlessly from her mouth. Yet, her voice has a definite feminine quality to it. The second piece she sings is the tenor aria "Vesti La Giubba" from Ruggiero Leoncavallo's opera, *I Pagliacci*. It is easy to understand how Bas Sheva's audiences would have been completely captivated by her beauty, rich voice, command of the stage, and unusual repertoire.

In 1954 she came out with a solo album, *The Soul of a People*, for Capitol Records. On it, she sings the standard *Sheyiboneh Beis HaMikdosh* by Schorr, *R'tseh* by Aryeh Leib Schlossberg and *Habeit* by Israel Alter (a composition that her father had previously recorded). *Zorei'a Ts'dokos*, *Mi She-Osoh Nissim* and *Sim Sholom* — also included — appear to be original arrangements of standard cantorial material. In a review of this album, *Hazzan* Samuel Weiss describes Bas Sheva's voice as having the "bedrock of a cabaret singer" as opposed to the classical training of today's female cantors.⁴ Newspaper reports list 70,000 copies of her album as having been sold throughout the United States and Europe.⁵

3 Personal interview with Mark Hausman, 2005.

4 Weiss, Samuel, posting to Jewish-Music@Shammash mailing list, March 5, 2001.

5 "Bas Sheva to Entertain Donor Guests," *Home News of Springfield Jewish Home for the Aged*, November, 1956.

Bas Sheva's greatest fame came from her appearances on the Ed Sullivan show. While performing in a variety show at Miami's Mount Sinai Hospital her talent was discovered by Ed Sullivan himself, the master of ceremonies for that night's benefit program. Little did he know that his invitation to Bas Sheva to perform on his show would cause so much controversy.

After she appeared on the Ed Sullivan show for the first time in 1956 with her standard *Sheyiboneh Beis haMikdosh*, the Union of Orthodox Rabbis wrote a letter strongly objecting to a woman singing liturgical texts on national television. Interestingly enough, they also opposed the fact that she had sung these texts without a head covering! They discouraged Ed Sullivan from having Bas Sheva on his show again. However, her fame was growing, and Sullivan looked beyond the angry letters and invited Bas Sheva back for another appearance in 1957. While she had appeared in the beginning of the lineup for her first appearance, her second performance shows her in the featured spot — the act just before the closing number. This was an obvious tribute to her popularity and effectiveness.

The angry letters continued after Bas Sheva's second performance, and not only from the Orthodox Union. The minutes of the Executive Council of the Cantors Assembly, taken at a meeting held at the Jewish Theological Seminary on February 25, 1957, show an entire section of the meeting devoted to discussing Bas Sheva's appearance on the Ed Sullivan show. It is reported that Hazzan Charles Bloch, the Cantors Assembly representative on the National Jewish Music Council, publicly objected to Bas Sheva's singing on the Ed Sullivan show as a representative of Jewish music in celebration of Jewish Music Month. Her performance was found objectionable. In reply, a representative of the Jewish Welfare Board accepted responsibility for her endorsement and "admitted that he was in error and assured the Council that such mistakes will not be repeated."

Hazzan Samuel Rosenbaum, then president of the Cantors Assembly, wired a telegram to Ed Sullivan on the Assembly's behalf, objecting to Bas Sheva's performance of liturgical music on his variety program. A letter was also sent to Cantor Louis Lippitz, honorary president of the Jewish Ministers Cantors Association who had also officially endorsed "Miss Sheva," urging him to think twice before giving such "unworthy and undeserving" endorsements.

Bas Sheva's sister, Gail Taksel, remembers that although Ed Sullivan was very fond of Bas Sheva's talent, he did not want the pressure of the rabbinical and cantorial authorities of New York. Bas Sheva offered to sing other music, but Mr. Sullivan was only interested in her for her unique singing of Jewish music. Therefore, she was no longer invited to appear on his show.

An interesting diversion in Bas Sheva's career came about when Les Baxter, a bandleader / composer of "lounge" or "bachelor pad" music in the 1940s and 1950s, discovered her. Baxter heard the depth and visceral quality of Bas Sheva's voice and was inspired to write *The Passion* for her — a piece in six movements with full symphony orchestra and choir. The music is almost completely wordless, comprised of hums, groans, and grunts. It was extremely risqué for its time. The piece contains a movement called "lust" and another depicting a child rape scene. Baxter was reportedly taken to court for federal pornography charges on account of it. According to Mark Hausman, comparing this piece to the *hazzanut* that his mother sang is like comparing "the sacred and the profane." It shows a totally different side of Bas Sheva.⁶

Most of her publicity came in the form of advertisements and reviews of the film (now a video) *Catskill Honeymoon* and of several touring Catskills revue-type shows, such as *Borscht Capades* and *Farfel Follies*. Praise for Bas Sheva abounds in these ads. "Miss Bas Sheva, the daughter of a New York cantor, brings a singing style of a quality that has attracted favorable operatic notice."⁷ Headlines in the *Los Angeles Times* on October 21, 1952 read *Farfel Follies Boasts Notable Song Headliner*, referring to Bas Sheva, who "made a notable impression with her renditions of traditional Hebraic melodies that were powerful in their dramatic effect."⁸

Praise for Bas Sheva's unique and powerful voice abounds, yet one review, written by Bob Ellis in a Miami newspaper in 1951, really says it all.

Those who continually look for reason for castigating — and I have discovered that writing a column and doing a radio program makes one a good target for such time wasting — have had a field day tossing barbs in my direction for my not mentioning Bas Sheva who is currently making her first cabaret appearance at Copa City. It is a matter of record, however, that space in this column today has been deliberately reserved for my comments on a woman who possesses one of the rarest talents I feel that I have been privileged to witness and hear. Bas Sheva came on the great Copa City stage and electrified an audience which doesn't "electrify" easily.

Around me people sat stunned with the impact of her first song — "I'm Gonna Live Till I Die." Who is she? What did the M.C. say her name was? Sensational! Great! were some of the superlatives and comments. She

6 Personal Interview with Mark Hausman, 2005.

7 *Musical Alps*, *Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 1950.

8 Schallert, Edwin. "Farfel Follies Boasts Notable Song Headliner," *Los Angeles Times*: October 21, 1952.

next offered “Where Can I Go” — a song brought back from abroad by Leo Fuld, who was given the song by a Polish displaced person who had written it while in a concentration camp. The rare artistry of this woman who sang this song with a passion and fervor never heard on a night club floor, was beginning to hit the Copa audience with full impact. I glanced around and saw that people had stopped eating — and were watching and listening and were experiencing that chill that goes up and down one’s spine when greatness is being witnessed.

Next came the surprise of my life in the entertainment field. Bas Sheva had announced that she would now sing “Vesti La Guibba,” the great tenor aria from *I Pagliacci*. Who is this woman who dares defy tradition and sing an aria only our greatest tenors have dared tackle, thought I. My mind quietly dwelled on the possibility of hearing Gigli, the great Italian tenor, approach with the same quiet dignity an announcement that we would now sing the “Bell Song” from *Lakmé*. I chuckled and waited — waited for what I was sure would be a novelty version, or burlesque version, of the aria. I reached over for a sip of coffee — and as I did so I heard a clear bel canto voice — a voice that might well have been Gigli himself. In clear, superb Italian, the lyrics poured forth — “I am but a clown, my heart is broken, the world is but a play — and every person therein but an actor.” I did not look up on the stage again, for fear that the illusion might be broken — for in my mind’s eye I recaptured the poignancy of the clown on the stage — singing, though his heart is broken. The aria finished, a glance to the stage and she was still there — Bas Sheva. I found it almost impossible to believe.

The audience roared approval, and Bas Sheva came back. This time placing on her head the cantorial cap, or yarmulke, to sing like I have never heard singing before. “Sheyiboneh Beis Hamikdosh” was Miss Sheva’s next offering. The chant of the people some for some two thousand years. The cry of the people whose temple had been ruthlessly defiled. Music and words depicting the endless strife, pathos and determination to rebuild their house of worship, and a place for themselves in the world! The actual engagement and presentation of Bas Sheva in a cabaret is, to my way of thinking, an act worthy of particular commendation.⁹

I found only one review of her work that was less than glowing. *Bagels and Yox of 1958*, an American-Yiddish Revue in which bagels were tossed into the aisles during the opening number, was not particularly well received by Melvin Maddocks of the *Christian Science Monitor*. From him we learn that Bas Sheva’s role in the show was to sing one cantorial selection, two traditional hymns, and one modern patriotic Israeli ballad. He notes that Bas Sheva’s

9 Ellis, Bob. *Greater Miami After Dark, AM — Miami Beach*, March 23, 1951.

voice has a range of more than three-and-a-half octaves, and says that her manner was spectacular, but that she sounded hoarse under the extreme demands she placed on her voice.¹⁰

The demands that Bas Sheva placed upon herself as a performer grew to be too much for her health. Even after she gave birth to Mark in 1953, Bas Sheva and Al continued to tour, bringing their son along together with a nursemaid. Despite the insulin injections that she gave herself daily, her health was affected and she began to lose her vision. Her doctors advised giving up show business, saying that all of the traveling and performing was too stressful. For Bas Sheva, singing was her life, and giving it up was not a possibility.

In an effort to accommodate her doctors' concerns, Bas Sheva and Al decided to take a luxury liner to Puerto Rico, where she had been engaged to perform. Rather than fly, they would enjoy a free cruise together, made possible by a few performances on board. Never having been on a ship before, Bas Sheva suffered terrible seasickness and went to the ship's doctor for medication. The doctor on board did not take her medical history correctly. The medicine he gave her for her seasickness reacted with her insulin injections and instantly killed her. The date was February 11, 1960. At the age of 34, Bas Sheva was buried in Woodbridge, New Jersey.

Sheindele di Khaznte (1915-1981)

Robed woman sings Hebrew church music

Shattering the ancient traditions of the synagogue, a woman donned satin robes of bridal white and sang Hebrew liturgical music to a large audience at Orchestra Hall yesterday afternoon. She prefers to be known as "Sheindele the Khazente" — *khazente* being the feminine form of the Hebrew term for cantor — but actually she is an American girl, Jean Gornish of Philadelphia. Only an expert in the highly specialized field of Jewish music could properly evaluate Sheindele's treatment of the ancient prayers and chants. Conventional critical standards are of little purpose here... Judged from the purely vocal aspect, Sheindele often appears to be imitating the male tenor voice, and there is actually very little of normal vocalization in her presentation. But there is an unmistakable air of artistry in the precision and exactness and in the sometimes throbbing emotionalism with which her songs are projected. Probably the main gauge of her ability was the response of the audience, and this was frequently

¹⁰ Maddocks, Melvin, "American Yiddish Review Presented at the Shubert," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 26, 1957.

stormy, often breaking out in unrestrained applause before the canteuse¹¹ — if that be the proper term — had even reached the end of a number.

Born Jean Gornish, Sheindele's fame would spread far beyond her hometown of Philadelphia.

Almost all of the articles about Sheindele show her performing in a Jewish context. A frequently used biography even makes the claim that after high school, she had many offers to perform in bands and at “swanky night clubs,” but she had made up her mind to become a “woman cantor.” There are only a few instances, early in her career, in which Jean sang in a non-Jewish context. At age eighteen she sang for the Halloween and New Year's Eve parties at the Lamb Tavern Inn, performing under the name of “Jean Walker — Slick Song Bird.”¹² One cannot help but wonder what her parents would have thought of that! It is very possible that she used this stage name to avoid word getting back to them and to the Jewish community.

In 1936 we see Jean being referred to as a *khaznte*. The Yiddish ad for the Bukier Beneficial Association advertises *di yiddishe khaznte — ir vet zikher hanoeh hobn fun ihre khazonishe nigunim* (the Jewish *khaznte* — you will surely enjoy her cantorial melodies). In addition, she is billed several times as *di barimte odesser khaznte mis dzhin gornish* (the famous *khaznte* from Odessa — Miss Jean Gornish). Knowing, as we do, that she was from Philadelphia, we can assume that this had to be a publicity stunt.

By 1937 Jean was appearing regularly on radio stations WRAX and WPEN. “Jean Gornish, alto” is listed as being a part of the premiere talk show *This is the Land* with key speaker Rabbi Edward Israel, Chairman of the Central Conference of Reform Rabbis' Committee on Social Justice.¹³ She was also a featured singer on the Planters Hi-Hat Peanut Oil radio show on WSBC.

Mary Bernstein, a classical singer who was a contemporary of Sheindele's on the Planters Peanut Oil show, explains that Sheindele had the freedom to choose her own new material each week, and that various singers would sing the Planters theme song together. Some of these singers, including both Mary and Sheindele, would also perform revue shows of duets and solos in the Catskills, in Atlantic City and all around Philadelphia. While Mary and Sheindele never developed a close personal friendship, Mary remembers

11 Goldberg, Albert. “Robed Woman Sings Hebrew Church Music,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*: December 25, 1944.

12 Idem.

13 Sheindele's Archives at the Philadelphia Jewish Archive Center.

Sheindele as a nice, generous person who was in a league of her own with her cantorial music.¹⁴

In 1938, when Jean was twenty-two years old, we see a real shift in her billing. Instead of “Jean Gornish the alto,” she became “Sheindele the Khaznte — the world’s only woman cantor.”¹⁵ Sheindele performed for many organizations in the Philadelphia area, listed as “the famous girl cantor,” and *di zisse khenevdike zingerin* (the sweet, lovely singer). At this point she had achieved enough fame for news of her bout with appendicitis and her recovery from it to be written about in the newspaper!¹⁶

The 1940s represented the height of Sheindele’s career. Whereas printed programs from the previous decade describe Sheindele performing with folk singers and comedians, during the 1940s she was more likely to share a recital or radio program with a cantor. Programs show her appearing with Cantors Shlomo Goldenberg, Jacob Barkin, Peretz Lemkof and Zanvel Kwartin, and she was usually the featured entertainment, rather than the opening act. Sheindele produced and sponsored gala shows of her own in which she invited both secular and Jewish performers to raise money for various charities. Advertisements were taken out in program books by family and friends. She had many fans and supporters. There is even evidence of a “Khaznte’s fan club!”¹⁷

As news of the “lovely lady cantor” spread further, so did Sheindele’s appearances. She performed in Washington DC, in Milwaukee, and in a monumental event at Chicago’s Orchestra Hall — in 1944 — under the Harry Zelzer Concert Management. She gave recitals for every holiday, including Hanukkah, Purim, Shavuot and even Mother’s Day. **Example 2.** shows Sheindele’s personal transcription of Jacob Rapaport’s *Brokhoh fun Hallel*, the cantor’s benediction prior to leading the recitation of Psalms 113-118.¹⁸

14 Personal Interview with Mary Bernstein, 2005.

15 Sheindele’s Archives at the National Museum of American Jewish History.

16 Sheindele’s Archives at the Philadelphia Jewish Archive Center.

17 Sheindele’s Archives at the National Museum of American Jewish History.

18 Her notation follows Cantor Mordechai Hershman’s recording of Rapaport’s composition, complete with brief instrumental riffs between sections (Philadelphia: Gratz College Library), Rare Books Collection of the Music Department.

1 *Piano* *tr*

6 *mp* *Piano* *Piano*

Bo - - ruch A - toh

11 *p* *Piano*

A-do-shem

16 *3*

E - lo-kei - - - nu me - lech,

21 *3*

me - - - lech, me - lech

24 *5*

ho -

27 *3* *Piano*

o - lom

32 *tr* *tr*

Oi a - sher

40 *Piano* *tr*

Oi a - sher_ kid-i - sho - nu b'-mitz - vo - sov,

44 *Piano*

b' mitz-vo - sov, ki- d'

49
sho - nu ki - d' - sho - - - nu, ki - d' sho -
53
nu, ki - d' sho - nu b' mitz - vo sov
56 Piano
61 Piano
66
68
lik' - ro li - k' - ro
es ha - ha - lel.

Example 2. Sheindele's personal transcription of Jacob Rapaport's *Brokhoh fun Hallel*, after Mordechai Hershman's recording.

There were some performances that blur the line between Sheindele as a performer and Sheindele as a cantor. While she certainly could not lead services in a synagogue, the Passover seder was a unique opportunity in which she was allowed more freedom. Throughout the years, programs show Sheindele appearing alongside other cantors leading *sedarim* in Atlantic City hotels. Eventually, Sheindele was able to lead the seder on her own. In an undated clipping, Hotel Jenoff advertises: "Sheindele will officiate with her own choir at the Passover *sedarim*."¹⁹ Sheindele assisted several cantors in leading High Holiday services that took place in hotels, and at times served as a choir director and soloist. She was once the featured soloist at Philadelphia's Metropolitan Opera House with Hazzan Peretz Lemkof officiating. Furthermore, there are several examples of Sheindele actually conducting services, though the type of service is unclear. In 1945, she "conducted services" for the Pennsylvania Army and Navy Service Committee. Later clippings show that she led ser-

19 Sheindele's Archives at the Philadelphia Jewish Archives Center.

vices at a hospital. Her niece, Maida Averbach, claims that she did lead some actual Shabbat services. Though she could not officiate in a synagogue, it is significant that Sheindele did lead services in some capacity.

Sheindele's archives show fewer programs from the 1950s. When asked about this gap in her singing career, Maida explains that Sheindele had problems with arthritis and also developed a nodule on her vocal cords at one point and had to limit her singing. She was able to recover and her fame certainly did not diminish, for several of her key performances took place in the early 1960s.

Sheindele began appearing more frequently on the Yiddish stage, including the Park Theater in Chicago and the Folksbiene in New York City. She was always featured as a solo musical performer, and did not appear in any of the dramatic skits.

On May 1, 1960, "Cantor Sheindele" took part in a major cantorial concert in Carnegie Hall, starring Cantors David Kusevitsky, Bela Hershkowitz, Zvee Aroni and fellow khaznte Perele Feig. Performances at various synagogues and organizations continued throughout the 1960s. When Sheindele left her regular radio broadcast on the Planters Hi-Hat Peanut Oil show, WSBC radio station called upon all "lovers of liturgical music" to arrange a farewell banquet and concert in her honor.²⁰

Sheindele's singing career slowed down considerably as the 1970s approached. Her later years were spent in Tenafly, New Jersey, where she worked at an office job in a hospital and, as always, spent time with her family.

Examining pictures of Sheindele, one might guess that she was a serious, quiet, studious type of woman. Her family says quite the opposite! Sheindele brought life with her wherever she went. She was a comedian! She liked jokes, loved to have fun, and always made everyone laugh at the dinner table. Her niece remembers her driving to Atlantic City wearing funny glasses with a mustache and a big nose just to get a laugh. Her brother Sidney calls her a "live wire," claiming that she made every *simkhe* (Yiddish: celebratory occasion) a real *simhah* (Hebrew: joy). She would take over as mistress of ceremonies — entertaining, singing and telling jokes. She would lead their family's *seudarim* and would breathe life into the Haggadah, dramatically acting out the parable of the four sons and encouraging everyone to sing and harmonize the seder songs with her.²¹

20 Sheindele's Archives at the National Museum of American Jewish History.

21 Personal Interviews with Honey Levin, Maida Averbach, and Sidney Gornish, 2005.

Sheindele loved having family come to her house. Her nephew Marvin remembers visiting Sheindele on Sundays in the summer and going swimming in her pool. Sheindele's sister Honey says that it breaks her heart to remember the end of her sister's life. Sheindele suffered from lung cancer, which eventually caused her death in April of 1981 at the age of sixty-six. Honey remained by her side until the end.²²

Soon after Sheindele's passing her sister, Sylvia Silver, donated much of Sheindele's materials to the Philadelphia Jewish Archives Center and to the National Museum of American Jewish History, both located in Philadelphia. There are albums full of her publicity material, concert programs, newspaper ads, sheet music, a notebook of Sheindele's compositions, full size posters from her performances, and various objects including her High Holiday prayerbook cover and cantorial robe.

Perele Feig — Hungarian Khaznte (1910-1987)

Dressed in cantorial costume, Perele Feig created a deep impression. Her voice is unusually rich and warm, with sombre qualities in low register and upper tenor tones of striking timbre. Besides having mastered the cantorial tradition, Miss Feig is an impressive singer by concert standards. There were many rewarding moments during her singing of cantorial and folk song groups. She uses her warm, powerful voice with the conscience of any artist and it was often times a source of wonder how she maintained such a clarity of line when singing so fervently. She is an artist whose resources of movement, ²³gesture, facial mobility and dramatic instinct are uncommonly compelling.

Perele's career began rather late in life, after she married Jack Schwartz whom she had met through a family friend, and gave birth to their only child, a daughter named Renee. While vacationing in the Catskills, Perele was walking around humming to herself, as she always did. The owner of the Avon Lodge, Meyer Artkin, overheard her voice and told her that she had tremendous talent and really should do something with it. Perele had been reared in a community where women were not encouraged to sing solo, let alone sing hazzanut, and Atkin's simple encouragement was enough to get her started.

Once she was heard, it was inevitable that her career would take off quickly. Between the 1950s and 1970s, she performed on a radio program over New York's station WEVD, first on a Saturday night segment, and later on Sunday.

22 Personal Interviews with Marvin Gornish and Honey Levin, 2005.

23 Maley, S. Roy, in *The Winnipeg Tribune*.

Perеле was accompanied by composer Abraham Ellstein and sponsored by Shapiro's Wine. She would usually sing her theme, the refrain from Joshua Samuel Weisser's *R'tseh Asirosom*, one full cantorial number, and one Yiddish folk song. Because she had to sing new pieces every week, Perеле developed a vast repertoire. Her daughter Renee remembers that although her mother constantly performed her favorites, she was always learning new material. Contemporaries of Perеле's who sang on the Jewish radio stations claim that Perеле tried everything, and was not afraid to interpret any of the Master's' pieces.²⁴

Hazzanim Solomon and Jacob Mendelson, whose parents were close friends of the Feig family, remember Perеле's singing of *Tiher Rabi Yishmoel*, a recitative that was more closely identified with the cantor who wrote it — Zavel Kwartin, — than any other. They claim that note for note, Perеле sounded exactly like Kwartin. Jack Mendelson once played her recording of this piece for Israel Goldstein, then dean of the Hebrew Union College's School of Sacred Music, and even he thought that it was Kwartin singing! Sol Mendelson is of the opinion that Kwartin's pieces worked so well in Perеле's voice because his music stayed primarily in a middle register, with occasional upper-octave leaps. She never attempted singing material that required a sustained high register, such as that of Moshe Koussevitsky. Perеле's trademark pieces were Kwartin's *Teka BeShofar Godol* and *UveYom Simhaskhem*, which she would sing successively. The *Teka* opens with a famous *dreydl* which she nailed perfectly each and every time. According to Sol, Perеле could sing every *dreydl* and *krekhts*²⁵ ever written!²⁶

Perеле was well known on the cantorial concert circuit. She sang in all of the Catskills hotels, appeared regularly in St. Louis, and even had invitations to sing in South Africa, which she never accepted. Other concert venues included the Histadruth of New York and New Jersey, the Breakers Hotel in Atlantic City, the Young Israel Synagogues of New York and Boston, Brith Achim of Philadelphia, the Marmaros Federation of New York and Cleveland, Ocean Parkway Jewish Center of Brooklyn, Beth Tzedec of Toronto, the Heights Temple of Cleveland, Ohio, and Congregation Tifereth Judah of Revere, Massachusetts.²⁷

24 Personal Interviews with Renee Rotker, Barry Serota of Musique International, and Elizabeth Grossman, colleague of Perеле Feig, 2005.

25 traditional vocal "cry" in the Eastern European style of *hazzanut*

26 Personal Interviews with Solomon and Jacob Mendelson, 2005.

27 Brochures from the Jewish Lecture Center Bureau, Feig Family Collection.

Perele's typical concert consisted of mostly cantorial pieces combined with a few Yiddish folk songs. She appeared at prestigious venues such as Town Hall and even Carnegie Hall, in a concert sponsored by WEVD and featuring Cantors David Kusevitsky, Zvee Aroni and Sheindele di Khaznte.

Perele also appeared on the Yiddish stage, although she did not perform there as a dramatic actress. During a typical evening a movie would be shown, followed by a vaudeville comedy act, followed by a singer. Perele performed with all the famous actors of the time, including Henrietta Jacobson, Molly Picon and Menashe Skulnik. She made several recordings on the Reena label, and like the other khazntes, entertained at weddings singing the familiar *ViMalei* by Brody²⁸ and Carrie Jacobs' *I Love You Truly*.²⁹

A Hanukkah concert program from 1955, in which "Khazente Perele Feig" performed as the guest artist with the Jewish Community Choir and Orchestra of Winnipeg, is typical. In her first set she performed *Oshamnu Mikol Am*, *Modim Anahnu Lohk*, *VeHu Rahum Yekhaper Ovon* and *Sholesh Seudes*. Her second set included *Tiher Rabi Yishmoel*, *Rozo DeShabbos*, *Birkhas Kohanim* and *Nigndl*.³⁰ Many of these same selections can be heard on a recent recording of the Khazntes — *Great Cantorial Singers — Masterpieces of the Synagogue* — released in 2005 by Tara Music.

Goldie Malavsky – The Malavsky Family Singers (1923-1995)

So Papa came to us and said, "Children, since New York has accepted you, we're going to Israel, and we have to see how Israel should accept us." In 1952, they made a trip for us to Israel. It was a beautiful experience. We made two, three concerts a day. We worked so hard, we all lost weight! They had all generations of Israelis come see us. They loved us so much... especially Goldie. They kept saying, "Goldie Malavsky, stay here, and Golda Meir should go home." They fell in love with her. They used to follow us around the streets saying "G'veret Goldie." It was just beautiful.³¹

²⁸ Editor's note: Brody was the name of the town where the actual composer, Marcus Strelisker (1806-1857) lived.

²⁹ Personal Interview with Renee Rotker, 2005.

³⁰ Chanukah Concert Program, Jewish Musical Club of Winnipeg, Dec. 11, 1955. Feig Family Collection.

³¹ Malavsky Sisters' Interview with the Milken Archive of American Jewish Music, 1998.

Goldie was born in Philadelphia on October 29, 1923, and she was the child who first started singing with her father Samuel at the young age of four. Hazzan Malavsky would take her on tour with him to sing in concerts and in services. By the age of six, Goldie had her own radio program. She would sing a new piece each week, and her father would accompany her on piano.

An advertisement in the *Washington Post* dated December 31, 1936 publicizes a service and concert at the Jewish Community Center in which Samuel Malavsky would be assisted by “his talented eleven-year-old daughter, Goldele, who sings folk songs and chants in cantor style.” Goldie’s boyish alto voice was perfect for the solos a young boy would typically sing, and so Samuel taught Goldie these solos and traveled with her, astounding many audiences with the unique abilities of his young daughter.

As young women living in California, Goldie and her older sister Gittie joined together to form a duo called “the Marlin Sisters.” Wanting to draw on their diverse musical abilities, they sang country, pop, and Yiddish songs. An offer to sing on a WMGM radio program starring Harry Hirschfield brought them to New York with their father. Gittie remembers the long train ride. It was Christmas Eve, and soldiers were traveling in the same car. She relates:

My father got really upset that the boys were making eyes at the girls... so in the middle of the night he said, “The only thing you can do to keep the boys quiet is to sing.” So we sang all the Christmas carols... to help the boys quiet down and go to sleep.³²

The Malavsky Family Singers came into being around the Shabbat dinner table. It was there that they would spend hours singing *zemirot*, harmonizing with each other, and learning new pieces that Samuel composed. The children improvised natural harmonies and created a sound so impressive that it would attract the neighbors to come listen outside the open windows. During World War II the family received their first offer to sing the High Holiday services together, in San Francisco. This group performance was so successful that Samuel decided the family should move to New York where they would have more opportunities to capitalize on their collective talent.

In New York, the Malavsky family gained fame and recognition. They traveled frequently, singing in concerts, leading services, and appearing on the radio. They were a unique phenomenon and were sought after in cities all over the United States and in Canada. As they drove thousands of miles in order to perform, the children would sing to prevent themselves from fighting in

32 Malavsky Sisters’ Interview with the Milken Archive of American Jewish Music, 1998.

the car! The cities where they enjoyed their biggest successes were Montreal, Quebec and Schenectady, New York.³³

Despite all the accolades, the Malavskys also attracted a great deal of opposition. They usually had to daven in special High Holiday services set up in hotels because the girls were not allowed to sing in Orthodox synagogues. Even in these hotel services they encountered many problems. Samuel Malavsky, however, viewed his daughters as children who loved to sing, and felt that they deserved to be heard. Goldie's sister, Ruth Malavsky, believes that her father would have been more famous and less controversial had he gone out on his own, but she adds that his family meant everything to him.³⁴

The biggest trouble we had was with rabbis who had nothing better to do. They found somewhere in the Talmud that you shouldn't hear a woman's voice. They wouldn't let us into the shuls, and so we sang in hotels. And the rabbis who wouldn't let us into their shuls used to come and buy tickets to hear us.

Hazzan Malavsky taught his daughters along with his sons because, he said, "I thought it was an example to show children that it was possible to be American — and to sing in Hebrew, too."³⁵ He was appalled by the hypocrisy of many rabbis and by the way they mistreated his daughters. His frustration led him to publish a study in a Canadian newspaper about synagogue choirs that included girls disguised as boys in order to achieve a certain vocal sound.³⁶

To the girls, rabbinic opposition felt like personal attacks. They had spent their entire lives learning to daven, learning prayers and compositions for Shabbat and every holiday, and some people wanted to forbid them from doing what they were raised to do, simply because they were girls. The Malavsky sisters remember an incident in which young Hasidim in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn threw a stink bomb into the shul where the Malavsky family was singing. It was their mother, Harriet, who came to the rescue and restored order in the service.

The Malavsky family appeared throughout the Catskill Mountains' Borscht Circuit hotels. They were frequent guests at the Concord and Grossinger's, and always led the Passover *sedarim* at one of the hotels. Their concert programs were very diverse. They would all come out onto stage wearing cantorial robes,

33 Malavsky Sisters' Interview with the Milken Archive of American Jewish Music, 1998.

34 Personal Interview with Ruth and Gittie Malavsky, 2005.

35 Gardner, Sandra. *New Jerseyans*, *New York Times*, June 10, 1984.

36 Personal Interview with Rabbi Morton Malavsky, 2005.

prayer shawls, and skullcaps. *Mi She-Osoh Nissim* was the family's favorite song, and they used it as their opening number. This was followed by three or four additional liturgical pieces. Hazzan Samuel would then speak a bit. He had a wonderful rapport with his audiences. The family would then leave the stage, and Avreml, the oldest son, would deliver a few jokes. Apparently, he was so handsome that "all the women in the audience loved him." Following the comedy act, Gittie and Goldie would come back on stage, now in nice dresses, to perform as the Marlin Sisters. Finally, the rest of the family would return to conclude with a few group numbers.

The Malavsky sisters all confirm that their father did not often sing solos without his choir, but that he would take the *khazonishe* parts of the liturgical numbers, and that they accompanied him by singing chords and harmonizing on the responses. Goldie would take the famous "boy alto" solos. She garnered fame for some of these solos – namely, her *Kevakoros* and *Havein Yakir Li*. Ruthie joined Goldie in the alto section, Avreml and Morty were both baritones, and Menucha and Gittie sang soprano. Often, an alto solo taken by Goldie would lead into a soprano – alto duet. Gittie and Menucha, who both possessed lovely soprano voices, would alternate on the soprano solos. According to Gittie, if one squeezed the other's hand, that was a signal that she would take the high note. It was true teamwork!³⁷

The Malavsky family made many recordings, reportedly more than any other Jewish family ensemble in the world.³⁸ Their earliest recordings were put out on the Disk and Banner labels. Under the Tikva Records label, the Malavskys released *The Passover Festival*, produced by Allen B. Jacobs in 1959, *Cantorial Masterworks* and *Songs My Mother Sang to Me*. Other recordings include *The Malavsky Family Sings Yiddish*, *Passover Seder Service*, *Hebrew Folk Songs*, *Pearls of Liturgical Masterpieces*, *Sabbath with the Malavsky Family*, *High Holiday Selections by the Malavsky Family*, *Holiday Prayers* and *Favorites of Cantors*, which contains an *Av Haraḥamim* cantorial solo sung by Goldie. Beside the more secular recordings that Goldie and Gittie made as the Marlin Sisters, Goldie also released several cantorial singles.³⁹ An advertisement from Metro Music Company lists Goldie Malavsky separately from Samuel Malavsky and Choir, and offers a special on three ten-inch records — *Yehi Rotson*, *Zokhreinu LeHayim*, and *Ikh Benk Aheym* — for the price of \$3.98.

37 The Malavsky Sisters' Interview with the Milken Archive of American Jewish Music, 1998.

38 *The Malavsky Family Story* video, Israel Music, c. 1976.

39 The Malavsky Sisters' Interview with the Milken Archive of American Jewish Music, 1998.

The Malavsky children also worked in Yiddish Theater. This meant performances on Friday evenings and Saturday afternoons, and although Samuel and Harriet would not attend these performances, they let their children make their own decisions regarding religious observance and performing. Goldie and Gittie were regulars at the Clinton Street Theater. It was through the theater that they really learned how to speak Yiddish.

Beginning in 1952, Samuel Malavsky set up tours in Israel for his family. As stated, the group was beloved there, receiving greater acceptance from Israel's religious community than from the one in America.⁴⁰

The Malavsky family's performances slowed down as, one by one, the children married. Their spouses and in-laws did not want them to travel anymore, and it became more difficult to get the family together. The Malavsky name is still known and respected in the United States and in Israel. Many of Samuel Malavsky's *hazzanic* settings – in the style of his mentor, Josef Rosenblatt — have become well known throughout the world, some of them attaining the status of synagogue standards. The Israeli army choir regularly sings his stirring melodies for *Havein Yakir Li* and *Kevakoros*. Goldie's daughter once visited the Great Synagogue in Jerusalem. Upon learning of her presence, the cantor decided on the spot to do an entire Malavsky service with his male choir. The Malavsky family story never really ends, for they have kept *Hazzan* Samuel Malavsky's music alive by passing it on to their children and grandchildren, who continue to bear the legacy of the Malavsky Family Singers.

Fraydele Oysher – Oy Iz Dos a Fraydele! (1913-2003)

Blessed with a magnificent voice and always surrounded by an aura of religious music, Fraydele Oysher's rise in the Yiddish Theatre was meteoric, and soon she went on to become the foremost singing star of that genre... The name Fraydele Oysher has become synonymous with musical excitement. Be it liturgical chant, a theatre song, or a typical Yiddish folk song, the listeners have the feeling that they are hearing it for the first time. She has the unique gift of making each song she sings sound as if it were written expressly for Fraydele Oysher.⁴¹

Fraydele was eight years old when her family emigrated to America and settled in Philadelphia. Soon after their arrival, Zelig and Lillie Oysher discovered their daughter's singing talent. They were extremely excited by what they

40 The Malavsky Sisters' Interview with the Milken Archive of American Jewish Music, 1998.

41 Civic Playhouse program notes.

heard, and began to find public arenas in which Fraydele could sing. She joined Mikhl Gelbart's choir at the Workmans' Circle, but that did not last long. Mikhl told her that her voice was too identifiable and could not blend in with the group. Instead, Mikhl chose to work with Fraydele privately on singing Yiddish folk songs.

Fraydele was soon singing her folk songs on the major Jewish radio stations in Philadelphia: WCAU; WFAN; and WREX. The first song Fraydele sang in public was Secunda's *A Mameh Iz Di Beste Fraynd* (A Mother is the Best Friend). Her first job was a performance for the Roumanian Hebrew Beneficial Association. Fraydele sang alongside her father in his synagogue choir, often joining him in duets and trios.

Meanwhile, Fraydele's older brother Moishe was rapidly making a name for himself, landing roles in the Yiddish Theater at the age of sixteen. Following his idol, Boris Tomashefsky, Moishe moved to New York to pursue a theatrical career. When Fraydele turned fifteen, Moishe brought her to New York to sing in a theatrical performance. Fraydele, who adored her brother and wanted to imitate everything that he did, decided that New York was the place for her, and she never returned to Philadelphia.⁴²

In a video interview with the Milken Archive of American Jewish Music, Fraydele remembers some of her early performances. She sang at Brooklyn's Amphion Theatre alongside Sheindele the Khaznte, and was paid the non-union scale of eighteen dollars. In the 1930s Fraydele busied herself by singing three radio shows a day. Stations WLTH, WEVD and WMCA each hired her for fifty minute segments. Jan Peerce — already a big star — was paid \$7.50 in those Depression years, and Fraydele received \$5. She was sponsored by Margareten Matzos, and at Passover time, would receive more matzah than could possibly be eaten!

In 1935 Fraydele married Harold Sternberg, who would become her lifelong partner and musical collaborator. Harold was a son of the legendary Yossel Bass of Bessarabia. As a boy soprano, Yossel was "stolen" — at first by Cantor Zeydl Rovner and later by Cantor Nisi Belzer — to sing in their choirs and read Torah for them. As an adult, the soprano turned bass performed as a cantor throughout Europe with his talented family as his choir.

His son Harold was born in Odessa, and met Moishe Oysher — a boy alto at the time — while the two of them sang in his father's choir. Yossel Bass came to America in 1923, followed by Harold in 1927 and Harold's mother in

42 Oysher / Sternberg Interview with the Milken Archive of American Jewish Music, May 31, 1995.

1929. Although Harold could have become a cantor like his father, he chose the theater. He distinguished himself as a fine basso profundo and performed in Gershwin musicals, in Kurt Weill's 1935 pageant *The Eternal Road*, and enjoyed a career in the Metropolitan Opera Chorus for forty years. He also served as a coach to Fraydele, who did not read music and learned everything by ear. Harold had a talent for languages and was recognized as the first singer to memorize three hundred operas!⁴³

In 1936, when Moishe Oysher could not earn a living wage through theater work, Harold's older brother Shammai convinced him that *hazzanut* was the way to go. According to Fraydele, Moishe's "heart was in the theater, while his soul was in the synagogue," and his life presented him with constant struggles between the two. His first experience officiating at the Roumanishe Shul in Manhattan's Lower East Side was met with shouts of *an aktyor zol davnen in a shul* (the very thought of an actor davening in a synagogue!). Despite the opposition, Moishe came to be known in both the world of theater and the synagogue world as one of the greatest.

Throughout their lives, Fraydele, Moishe and Harold remained very close. Fraydele lovingly described her brother as "my hero, my friend, my everything."⁴⁴

Fraydele's career brought her to communities all over the United States, Canada and South America. She took the world of Yiddish Theater by storm with her talent, her unique cantorial abilities, and her amazing energy and personality. She became widely famous even before her brother because she was doing something so unusual for a woman.

In theater, Fraydele specialized in playing a yeshiva boy who, only in the last scene of the play, would reveal that she was in fact a woman. In Fraydele's own words, "I was cute, I was flat and I was a terrific piece of work."⁴⁵ Many Yiddish plays were written for her: *Fraydeles Khaseneh* (Fraydele's Wedding) by Louis Freiman; *Dos Khelemer Khazndl* (The Cantor of Chelm) and *Dem Khazns Tokhter* (The Cantor's Daughter) by Morris Nestor; *Nebekh a Yesoymele* (Poor Orphan) by Yaakov Bergrin; *Goldene Meydele* (Golden Girl, later known as *A Khazndl Oyf Shabes* and *A Khazndl Oyf Yontif*) by Avraham

43 Michaels, Marilyn, liner notes to *The Oysher Heritage* (MEW Productions, 2005).

44 Oysher/Sternberg Interview with the Milken Archive of American Jewish Music, 1995.

45 Interview with *The Daily News*, 1996.

Blum; *A Khazn Kimt in Shtot* (A Cantor Comes to Town); *Freydele iz nit keyn Meydele* (Freydele is not a Girl); and *Mazl Tov Fraydele*.

Beside the yeshiva boy role, Fraydele often played the daughter or wife of a cantor. The fact that Fraydele could sing a cantorial number on stage set her apart, and in every play, she had the opportunity to sing cantorial pieces.

A review of *Fraydele's Khasene* states:

*Veynik Yidishe piesn hobn azelkhe fayne, tsikhtike un lirishe muzikalishe numern vi di komedye "Freydeles Khasene," un in zingen iz takeh faran dos beste fun Freydele... iberhoypt tsu khazonish, vos zi hot fun dos ongezungen on a shiur, un gezungen vi an emeseh khaznte oder vi a khazn, punkt vi zi volt baym omud geshtanen.*⁴⁶

Few Yiddish plays have such fine, neat and lyrical musical numbers as the comedy *Fraydele's Wedding*, and in singing, it is really Fraydele's best... mainly in hazzanut, of which she sang a tremendous amount, and sang like a true khaznte, or like a hazzan, just as if she were at the prayer stand.

Fraydele's archives, now housed in YIVO, contain programs from performances throughout her life. In 1936 Fraydele and Harold took their first trip south of the border, visiting Buenos Aires and Cuba. In Buenos Aires, Fraydele played the role of young Yitzkhok in Avraham Goldfaden's *Akeydes Yitzkhok*, and also performed in Boris Tomashefsky's play *Bar Mitsveh*. When she saw the poverty of the Jews in Cuba, Fraydele decided to give her concert gratis, to an extremely appreciative audience.

In 1945 Fraydele was performing in the moderately successful show, *The Little Queen*, in Chicago. Hearing that her father had taken ill, she wanted to go home. Mary Martin, who happened to be playing in the show next door, convinced Fraydele that if she wanted to be a true performer, she should not leave. She stayed, and throughout her life, never left a show. She even went on stage pregnant. Here is Seymour Rechtzeit, in an interview about the play *The Khazente*, by Joseph Rumshinsky:

When Fraydele Oysner appeared in that show she was dressed in the garb of a young male hazzan. This also concealed the fact that she was quite pregnant. In the midst of one of her cantorial selections she had gone into labor pains and was compelled to announce that "The hazzan is about to give birth!"⁴⁷

In 1947 Fraydele performed for the Bessarabian Society of Baltimore. Her first Canadian appearance took place in 1948 at the Mt. Royal Theatre in

46 Rozhansky, in *Lexicon of the Yiddish Theatre*, 1969.

47 Komansky, Samuel, *The Jewish Week — American Examiner*: Oct. 12, 1980.

Montreal. Undated programs show New York appearances in the Amphion Theatre, Lyric Theatre, Playhouse Theatre, Erlanger Theatre and the Bronx Art Theater, in *Der Khelemer Khazndl*. A concert program from Town Hall lists Fraydele among other famous performers such as Molly Picon, Zvi Scooler, Miriam Kressyn, Seymour Rechtzeit, Hazzan Moshe Stern, Hazzan Charles Bloch, and comedian Jackie Mason.

Out of town engagements included performances in: Worcester, Massachusetts; the Philadelphia Yiddish Art Theatre; Miami Beach, Florida; Congregation Ahavas Israel of Grand Rapids, Michigan (where she is advertised as “the greatest living American khaznte”); California at the Civic Playhouse (in *A Khazndl Oyf Shabbes*); and Chicago’s Civic Theatre and Douglass Park Theatre. Fraydele was particularly close with Oscar Ostroff, director of the Douglass Park Theatre. Their partnership led to many successful Chicago engagements, and Fraydele’s archives contain many of Ostroff’s warm letters to her. Fraydele had the opportunity to sing in South Africa during the Apartheid era, but she refused to sing in a concert where the audience would be segregated. Because the concert bureau would not make provisions for blacks to attend, Fraydele refused to perform.

Fraydele and Harold both worked with all the well known Jewish musicians of the time. According to them, Alexander Olshanetsky had “soul and fire” as a conductor. Joseph Rumshinsky had “easy hands.” Sholom Secunda, however, was the best conductor. He “felt the pulse of a singer,” could transpose on the spot, and had a folkloristic streak. Fraydele and Harold loved Hazzan Yossele Rosenblatt — “a sweet, dear man and a great musician.”⁴⁸ Fraydele’s archives show that she and Harold also socialized with Molly Picon, and were even invited to her eighty-fifth birthday celebration!

Fraydele had a regular radio program, but because Harold felt that recordings might cause people to stop listening to her radio segments and attending her performances, Fraydele did not record many pieces professionally. In the late 1940s she recorded four sides on ten-inch 78 rpms for the Banner records label. Abraham Ellstein accompanied Fraydele’s *Eilu Devorim* by Jacob Rapoport, *Ribono Shel Olam* for *Sefiroh* by Harold Sternberg, *Oshamnu Mikol Om* by David Roitman and *Havein Yakir Li* and *Sh’ma Yisroel* by Yossele Rosenblatt. In 1960, *Songs My Brother Moishe Sang* was released on Tikva Records by Fraydele and her daughter Marilyn Michaels, followed by the album *Yiddishe Neshomeh* on Menorah Records.⁴⁹

48 Oysher / Sternberg Interview with the Milken Archive of American Jewish Music, 1995.

49 Personal Interview with Barry Serota, 2005.

When asked why she did not appear in any films, Fraydele related that she was supposed to make a film of *The Cantor's Daughter* right before the Second World War, but fighting broke out and changed the plans. After the war, the audience for Yiddish films had diminished and very few were being made. When she was finally approached to do a film, she was pregnant and could not participate. Harold, who acted as Fraydele's personal composer and coach, must have thought that Fraydele needed to be in a film, for in her archives is a scene-by-scene description of Harold's idea of a suitable story line for her. The title is *Oy Iz Dos A Freydele*, and the plot is typical. Right before *Selihot* services, the cantor is involved in an accident. The congregation and choir, already in place for the service, panics — until Fraydele, the cantor's daughter — enters disguised as a boy. All goes well until Jack, her love interest / agent, calls in reporters. The congregants are opposed to the reporters in the synagogue and do not understand what is happening. Fraydele takes off her disguise and says that she can no longer pretend, she is not in fact a hazzan; she is Fraydele, the hazzan's daughter.

There is an uproar in the synagogue. How could this girl have the nerve to stand on the *bimah* and *daven* as if she were a hazzan? The rabbi takes pity and asks that God be merciful to the girl for her sin. Fraydele leaves the synagogue. Due to the publicity, she has risen to fame. She becomes successful as a radio singer and performer and all ends well between Fraydele and Jack.⁵⁰

Harold's film idea was never brought to fruition. The structure of the story, however, shows all the typical elements of the plays written specifically for Fraydele: the opportunity to sing hazzanut; fooling everyone into thinking she was a boy and then revealing her true self; and the pursuit of fame and of a love interest.

Conclusion and Evolution

Who was the first woman cantor? Each of the khazntes claimed that distinction. Sophie was certainly the earliest to record, in 1924, and she presumably had to have made a name for herself before then. Fraydele, born in 1913, also began her career in the 1920s when she sang on the radio as a child. Bas Sheva and Goldie, both born in the early 1920s, sang with their fathers when they were as young as four years old. Sheindele may have been the first to actually lead services, in the 1940s.

These six were not the only women who attempted to sing cantorial music, but they were the ones who became famous for doing so. As early as the 1930s

50 Fraydele's Archives at YIVO.

we find references to Betty Simanoff singing “cantorial things” on the radio.⁵¹ Liviya Taychil appeared twice weekly on WHOM under the pseudonym *Di Odesser Khaznte*, and Ms. Sabina Kurtzweil performed on WCNW as *Di Berliner Khaznte*.⁵² Radio logs even contain a listing for “Goldie Mae Stiner — the world’s only colored lady cantor.”⁵³ In the 1940s, Bobby Miller sang under choral conductor Oscar Julius at Temple Beth El, an Orthodox Mecca of hazzanut in the Borough Park section of Brooklyn. She disguised herself as a boy in order to sing with the all-male choir for the High Holidays. Members of that choir recount how Bobby would bind her chest, put her hair up into her hat, and sing alongside the men for many High Holiday seasons until her charade was discovered.⁵⁴ Another popular female singer of Jewish music, Mimi Sloan, occasionally included a liturgical piece in her repertoire.⁵⁵

When Betty Robbins became the first woman cantor to occupy a Reform pulpit in 1955, the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York did not yet officially admit women into its School of Sacred Music.⁵⁶ It wasn’t until twenty years later that the first Reform woman cantor was invested by that institution.⁵⁷ The Conservative Jewish Theological Seminary’s Cantors Institute, now the H.L. Miller Cantorial School, first granted women the diploma of Hazzan in 1987.⁵⁸ It was not until 1991 that women were admitted into the Cantors Assembly (the professional organization for Conservative cantors).⁵⁹

These decisions to admit women into the cantorate were brought about by societal changes. The movement away from the male clergy model as dictated by tradition was a natural occurrence in an increasingly egalitarian society. Today, the women who graduate from cantorial programs in accredited institutions of higher Jewish learning are free to sing sacred music as women, not in imitation of men, in any octave they choose. For these reasons there is no direct relation between the *khazntes*’ careers and the formal recognition of women cantors in the liberal branches of American Judaism.

51 *Der Tog*, October, 1928.

52 Kelman, Ari, *Station Identification: The Culture of Yiddish Radio in New York*: New York University, 2003.

53 Personal Interview with Henry Sapoznik, 2005.

54 Personal Interview with Barry Serota, 2005.

55 Personal Interviews with Mimi Sloan, 2005.

56 “Woman Named Cantor in New York,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 3, 1955.

57 “The New Cantor,” *Reform Judaism*: Winter 2003.

58 *Cantors Assembly 50 Years Jubilee Journal*, 1998, p. 368.

59 *Ibid.* pp. 370-371.

However, it is clear from the khazntes' reviews and advertisements that their singing caused many people to take notice and to think about the issue of women cantors. Their audiences evidently marveled at the sound they produced — a sound that was molded as a direct imitation of male cantors. From an entertainment perspective, the khazntes were novelty acts. From a religious perspective, the fact that these women were singing liturgical texts in the style of hazzanut — whether on the stage or on the bimah — challenged certain sensibilities.

Who was the first woman cantor? They were all firsts — Sophie, Bas Sheva, Sheindele, Perele, Goldie, and Fraydele. Each one of these women's voices was the first woman's voice that many people heard singing hazzanut on the radio. Each of these women's faces was the first woman's face that many observed on the *bimah* of a synagogue. Each of these women's performances caused many minds to entertain the thought of women as cantors for the very first time.

Long before women could even dream of the actuality of becoming cantors, long before cantorial schools of any denomination even considered accepting women, long before women's voices were heard on a *bimah*, there were a few special women who challenged the strictures of tradition and dared to dream.

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Kol Ishah — An Analysis of the “Khazntes” Phenomenon

by Hayley Kobilinsky Poserow

Who They Were

In the early-to-mid 20th century in America, several observant Jewish women, independently of each other, embarked on an unusual journey. These women, all with great respect for the tradition and gifted with unique voices, began to record and perform Jewish liturgical music publicly. Some were descended from generations of cantors, others from generations of Yiddish theater performers. All became expert purveyors of the cantorial style of the time, singing lengthy, ornamented, complicated liturgical compositions known as recitatives. (Unlike an operatic recitative, which is the “speaking” sort of music that advances the story and connects larger arias and ensemble pieces, a cantorial recitative is akin to the operatic “aria.” The “speaking” function might be described in cantorial terms as laymen’s “davening.”) It was unusual enough for women to be performing in early-20th-century America, especially for observant Jewish women to do so, but it was a concept wholly foreign to Jewish practice in all its manifestations for women to sing liturgical music.

Perhaps the most unusual aspect of these women’s singing was their vocal production; since cantorial music — or *hazzanut* — was heard at the time as sung exclusively by men, these women manipulated their voices and vocal technique to sound like men. None of them hid their female identities, but from listening to their recordings it would be difficult to determine whether the prayers were being chanted by male or female cantors. The women usually performed with some sort of nickname or stage name, often a Yiddish name with added “diminutive” (or “little”) and “beloved” (or “dear”) endings (e.g., Sheinde becomes Sheindel (diminutive “little” Sheinde) and then Sheindele (iminutive “beloved” Sheindele). Similarly, Frayde becomes Fraydel and then Fraydele. Some of them added the qualifier *die khaznte*, from the Yiddish pronunciation of the Hebrew *hazzan*: *khazn* — or “cantor.” *Die Khaznte*, intended to signify “the woman cantor,” literally meant “the cantor’s wife.” The term *Khaznte* resulted from a Yiddish feminization of an otherwise masculine-connoting term. The term *Khazntes* soon became a way to refer to the entire group of women who sang such material at that time, and although some of them never personally used the term and others rejected it entirely, it remains their common appellation.

The Khazntes gained popularity for their performances of *hazzanut* on recordings, but also in concert, on the radio, and occasionally on film and television. They performed in cities with major Jewish populations, including but not limited to New York, Philadelphia and Chicago, throughout Canada and various South American cities. They might have become prominent cantors in synagogues, were it not for the restrictions that halakhah (Jewish law) places on hearing a woman's voice in prayer. The Khazntes were thus unable to function as *sh'lihei tsibbur* (designated representatives of the congregation in prayer). Even the most liberal congregations at the time would not accept a woman as *sh'liah tsibbur*, and not until 1975 was the first female cantor invested by Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, seminary of the Reform movement, and not until 1987 was the diploma of *hazzan* granted to women by the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary. As a result of halakhic restrictions the only synagogue appearances of the Khazntes were in concert and as entertainers at bar mitzvah and wedding receptions. Two of the Khazntes also sang at Passover seders in resort hotels and one sang during High Holy Day services alongside a male cantor (thus ensuring that the prayers be deemed halakhically acceptable to the worshipers, who must not have been observant Orthodox Jews due to their tolerance of a man's and woman's voice being commingled at the prayer lectern).

With the fading of the period known as the Golden Age of the Cantorate (approximately 1900-1940), during which time *hazzanut* was considered *en vogue* and cantorial concerts drew large audiences, and with the subsequent decline of Yiddish-speakers after the Holocaust, the Khazntes' careers slowly tapered off. While some continued performing into the 1990s, their novelty had passed by the 1970s. When women officially entered the cantorate in the mid-1970s, the notion of Khazntes became obsolete.

The Khazntes represent an element of Jewish musical history barely touched upon in existing research. Although the early Khazntes are mentioned fleetingly in many descriptions of Jewish women and liturgical music throughout history, they have been largely shunted aside in favor of more established areas of Jewish culture, e.g. Yiddish theater and radio. Perhaps they have merited so little attention in histories of women and music because other women assumed more prominent roles on the Yiddish stage, and male cantors of the day gained more fame singing in concerts, on radio, and as *sh'lihei tsibbur*. Until the appearance of this 2007 *Journal of Synagogue Music* issue the most that has been written on the subject of Khazntes is a paragraph or two in or encyclopedia entries about related topics, such as "women in music" or "Yid-

dish radio” or “Yiddish theater,” but nothing has been written about women during the American cantorate’s Golden Age.

Research on female *sh’lihei tsibbur* reveals instances of women functioning as leaders of congregations of other women at isolated points in history, as well as one notable instance of a congregation in New York — Temple Avodah — that engaged a woman, Betty Robbins, as cantor in 1955, twenty years before female cantors were first invested.¹ While the Khazntes may not have played pivotal roles in history, changed the face of Judaism or created a new group of empowered female prayer leaders, their success and popularity reveal a great deal about the time period, and their place in Jewish music history merits study.

Outside of two personal archives (Sheindele, a.k.a. Jean Gornish, and Fraydele Oysher) and scattered newspaper clippings, the only sources of detailed information about the Khazntes are surviving relatives as well as surviving recordings that demonstrate their art. To understand the phenomenon of the Khazntes one must consider the historical, religious and artistic contexts of the time — including the period known as the Golden Age of the Cantorate — the received halakhah, women on the Yiddish stage, and female prayer leaders prior to 1975. One must then analyze the phenomenon from a number of perspectives, including tracing its evolution from the 1920s to the 1970s, discussing acceptance and rejection by their families as well as the public, comparing their careers, highlighting matters of gender identity, of effects on women performers, on society in general, and finally, evaluating the lasting impact of their work.

The Cantorate’s Heyday in America

Growing out of the Eastern European Ashkenazi musical tradition, virtuoso *hazzanut* with its elaborate vocal embellishments grew quickly in popularity, thanks in part to the ease of distributing recordings and in part to the practice of traveling cantors. Much like today, synagogues in the 1800s might engage cantors to serve their pulpit for a fixed period of time, but prominent cantors were in high demand and would go where they could earn a better living. For some congregations, there was not enough money to engage a cantor or even a rabbi on a regular basis. For others, there was far more prestige (which translated into significant contributions from affluent members) for

1 Sandra Robbins, “Robbins, Betty,” *Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. Paula E. Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore, (New York: Routledge), 1998: 1158-1159.

both synagogue *and* cantor to hire whoever was most popular at the time. Thus the cantor would travel vast distances week-to-week for his next engagement, which would easily earn him a small fortune. One renowned cantor with extensive musical, linguistic and religious training from Odessa, Pinchas Minkowsky, was given a five-year \$5,000 per year contract from Congregation K'hal Adath Jeshurun on Eldridge Street on the Lower East Side of New York City. Considering that their rabbi made \$100 per year at the time and that the average worker brought home \$600 per year,² the cantor was clearly considered both an inspiration to the congregants and a status symbol.

During the tail end of the 19th century in America and through World War I, *hazzanut* held its audience. As the public became more and more eager to hear the music both in prayer and in concert, more cantors arose to fill the void. The demand being high, a notable cantor could set the ground rules for his performance, including compensation, mode of transportation, length of tour and desirable billing.³ Cantors recited prayers with a wide array of vocal effects designed to color the words and add emotion to their delivery. These effects might include repetition of a particular word or phrase, difficult runs of arpeggios and coloratura, and dramatic use of dynamics ranging from a thunderous forte to a pianissimo falsetto that tapered into near-silence. Familiar themes might be worked into a recitative, whether biblical motif, folk tune, or hint of opera.⁴ Additionally, much like classical music today, the focus was not only on new compositions, but also on a particular cantor's rendition of favorite pieces of the day, the titles of which might be called out loud by an adoring audience. Thus a cantor singing in concert or on a Sabbath brought not only religious enlightenment but also entertainment to a particular group of people interested in exploring their culture's musical tradition, especially those who might not have been able to afford concert going and who went instead to synagogue. A combination of high cantorial artistry and the public interest that supported it led to the later dubbing of that epoch as the Golden Age of the Cantorate.

2 *United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service*, "National Historic Landmark Nomination," found at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nhl/designations/samples/ny/eldridge/pdf> on the Internet; page 24.

3 Mark Slobin, *Chosen Voices: The Story of the American Cantorate* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press), 1989: 60.

4 Irene Heskes, "The Golden Age of Cantorial Artistry," *The Golden Age of Cantors: Musical Masterpieces of the Synagogue*, ed. Velvel Pasternak and Noah Schall (New York: Tara Publications), 1991: 7-8.

Kol Ishah

Halakhah does not just affect its adherents while they're in the synagogue as observant Jews governed by its tenets. From what one eats to how one dresses, halakhah provides specific instructions. The observant Jewish woman, in particular, must be constantly aware of certain restrictions dealing with food preparation and modesty, but is exempt from many time-bound positive commandments such as daily prayer; dealing with family and home is traditionally considered to be her prime responsibility. To properly describe the halakhic context in which the Khazntes lived, one must investigate two issues: *kol ishah* (a woman's voice); and the notion of a woman as *sh'liah tsibbur*.

Kol Ishah is the term by which one refers to the laws dealing with men hearing a woman's voice. The restrictions stem from a section of Talmud stating that one should not hear a woman's voice when reciting the *Sh'ma*. In the Babylonian Talmud, tractate *B'rakhot*, 24a, there is a discussion of the conditions under which a man may or may not recite the *Sh'ma* in bed. Various opinions are given, depending upon who is present (a wife or children), if there is physical contact with the wife, and/or the ages of the children. The discussion then turns to women's garb, and what states of undress would create sexual arousal, and thus be considered unacceptable times for a man's prayer. One example given is *kol b'ishah ervah*, or: "in a woman, the voice alone is nakedness /sexual incitement."

The noun *ervah* (nakedness) comes from the same root (Ayin-Resh-Vav) as the adjective *eirom* (naked), as were Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden: "The two of them were naked... yet they felt no shame."⁵ While the two terms are translated alike, they have different connotations: *eirom* means physical nakedness but has no sexual connotations; while *ervah* means naked with a connotation of sexual relations that are often taboo.⁶ The term *ervah* appears repeatedly in Leviticus Chapter 18, in the context of various prohibited sexual relations. Therefore, the Talmudic dictum *kol b'ishah ervah* imparts a taboo sexual connotation to the voice of a woman, the term *ervah* being instantly recognizable to one familiar with the list of Canaanite abominations in Leviticus.

The discussion in BT *B'rakhot* 24a on *kol b'ishah ervah* cites from Song of Solomon 2: 14, "Let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet and your face is comely." Other examples given include an exposed leg, quoting from Isaiah

5 Genesis 3: 1; all translations are from the JPS *Tanakh*, Second Edition (2000).

6 Rachel Biale, *Women & Jewish Law: An Exploration of Women's Issues in Halachic Sources* (New York: Schocken), 1984: 177.

47: 2, “Strip off your train, bare your leg, wade through the rivers...your nakedness shall be uncovered, and your shame shall be exposed,” and a woman’s hair, quoting from Song of Solomon 4: 1, describing a beautiful woman while using an animal metaphor, “your hair is like a flock of goats.”

Rabbis broadened the law to incorporate any instance of hearing a woman’s singing voice. Traditional Judaism viewed both men and women’s sexual desires to be equal, but considered women to have the ability to act as temptresses, particularly through use of their voices, and thus restrictions were placed in various realms: e.g. for modesty and as not to attract the attention of other men, married women’s hair should be covered in public.⁷ This was part of the reason why women could not serve as *sh’lihei tsibbur*; their voices would tempt men’s sexual desires and thus distract them from their prayer, “...for the voice of a woman leads to lewdness...”⁸. Restrictions such as ensuring one’s modesty through mode of dress, hair covering, or quieting one’s voice place the burden of taming the male potential of impropriety squarely upon women. The concept of separate seating in synagogues was used as an additional safeguard to prevent the distraction of men from their prayers by the sight of a woman or the sound of her voice, though women had still been allowed to conduct their own separate worship services in Germany as late as the 13th century, led by a *zogerin*.⁹

As men were halakhically obligated to pray three times a day but women were largely exempt from time-bound positive commandments, the same restrictions did not apply to men. If a man’s voice distracted a woman from her prayer, it was not deleterious, since the woman was not obligated to say the prayer in the first place. Furthermore, according to halakhah, only one who must fulfill the obligation of saying a prayer is permitted to recite that prayer on behalf of a congregation. Hence the traditional symbolism of calling up a boy of Bar Mitzvah age to read from the Torah. More importantly, when the Bar Mitzvah recites the blessing over the Torah, he is serving as “prayer leader,” i.e., commanding the congregation to say the prayer by using the imperative *tsivui* form of “to bless”: ‘Bless Adonai!’ That acceptance of the role of *sh’li’ah tsibbur* — however fleeting — marks the child’s entrance into adulthood and his assumption of an adult’s prayer responsibilities. Contrarily,

7 Susan Weidman Schneider. *Jewish and Female: Choices and Changes in Our Lives Today* (New York: Simon and Schuster), 1984: 67.

8 C. Baum, P. Hyman, S. Michel. *The Jewish Woman in America* (New York: the Dial press), 1976: 10.

9 Also referred to as *forzogerin*, *verzogerin*, or *zogerke*; Israel Abrahams. *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages* (New York: Meridian Books), 1960: 25.

a woman — who is not obligated to say prayers — is considered unacceptable to serve as prayer-leader, even momentarily, according to halakhah.¹⁰

However, this generalization is subject to various interpretations. For example, though women are generally considered exempt from the time-bound commandment to hear the Torah being read, other authorities state that women are in fact obligated to hear the Torah reading, based upon a passage in Deuteronomy (31: 12),

Gather the people — men, women, children... that they may hear and so learn to revere the Lord your God and to observe faithfully every word of this Teaching.

If women are considered obligated to fulfill this commandment, then they should logically be permitted to read from the Torah (assuming there is no issue of *kol ishah* or another issue that would prevent a woman from touching the Torah scroll; one such issue would be menstruation, during which period a woman is considered a *niddah* — excluded, or unclean).¹¹

Forbidden to sing lest they be overheard, women were (and still are in certain Orthodox communities) often isolated from elements of both daily and religious life.¹² Not until the 1970s did the Reform movement ordain its first female rabbi and invest its first female cantor, and not until a decade later did the Conservative movement follow suit. Reform had long considered much of the halakhah outdated for modern life, and had accordingly created new rituals and adapted old ones to include women — Confirmation over 100 years ago and Bat Mitzvah some 50 years ago. It took a bit longer for egalitarian practice to overtake Reform's mother institution, the Hebrew Union College, where women were finally allowed to function as clergy only a generation ago. The Khazntes, however, were part of the observant Jewish world, and had no hope of becoming congregational cantors.

Women on the Yiddish and Vaudeville Stages

The institution of Yiddish theater was first to permit women to appear onstage, thereby removing the stigma of their performing in public. This stigma did not pertain solely to *Jewish* culture, but enjoyed a long history in European and American theater. As far back as Classical Greek theater and stretching forward in time to Tudor England, men were preferred to women for playing

10 BT *Rosh HaShanah* 30a; *Menahot* 43a.

11 Biale, *Women*, 1984: 24.

12 Charlotte Baum, Paula Hyman & Sonya Michel. *The Jewish Woman in America* (New York The Dial Press), 1976: 10.

female roles onstage. This convention may have had its roots in the tradition of Athenian performance; it was really a religious ceremony, not surprisingly, dominated by the men who subsidized it.¹³ Even after women slowly became part of theater companies in certain parts of Europe, audiences were not amenable. In 1629 a French touring company brought female performers to England, where they were termed “monsters” and hissed offstage.¹⁴ Before the Revolution of 1789 French theater women were threatened with excommunication by the Catholic Church, which deemed women performers sinful and immoral. The theater women also inspired philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau to write missives opposing the influence of women on the art of theater.¹⁵ A budding Yiddish theater at that time had similar constraints imposed upon it, but was ensconced in insular Jewish communities and followed a course of development independent to that of European theater.

The Yiddish light opera troupe founded by Jacob Dessauer in Amsterdam, 1784, included several women actors, reports Marion Aptroot, a professor of Yiddish Literature at Heinrich Heine University in Duesseldorf.¹⁶ She cites historian Hetty Berg of the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam as proof.

Women really played and sang on stage. That is well documented. They also did so in private performances. Both can also be gleaned from the contemporary parodies of theater playbills and performances, as can be found in the “Diskursn,” polemical pamphlets that were published in Amsterdam in the late 18th century.¹⁷

13 Author unknown, “A Guide to Ancient Greek Theatre,” found at <http://anarchon.tripod.com/indexGREEKTH.html> on the Internet.

14 Martha Fletcher Bellinger, “Elizabethan Playhouses, Actors, and Audiences,” *A Short History of the Theatre* (1927), pp. 207-13. Found at <http://www.theatrehistory.com/british/bellinger001.html>.

15 L. Clark, “Daughters of Eve: A Cultural History of French Theater Women from the Old Regime to the Fin de Siecle- Book Review,” *Journal of Social History*, Winter, 2003; found at http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2005/is_2_37/ai_111897859 on the Internet.

16 Marion Aptroot, “Eikhels’ ‘Colleagues’: About Yiddish Comedy Around 1800,” *Forverts*, Dec. 29, 2006.

17 Hetty Berg, “Jiddisch theater in Amsterdam in de achttiende eeuw,” *Studia Rosenthaliana* 26, 1-2, 1992:10-37; “Thalia and Amsterdam’s Ashkenazi Jews in the late 18th and early 19th centuries,” Jonathan Israel & Reinier Salverda, eds., *Dutch Jewry I, History and Secular Culture, 1500-2000* (Leiden: Brill), 2000: 191-199. The Berg quote appears in Joseph Michman and Marion Aptroot, eds., *Storm in the Community:*

Needless to add that Yiddish theater in late-18th century Amsterdam represented a small secular phenomenon in a largely Orthodox environment.

In the late 19th century, Yiddish theater reached the United States, where women had been performing onstage since the late 18th century. The rapidly assimilating audiences of Yiddish theater were certainly affected by American culture, and political issues of the day played out on the Yiddish stage, including those regarding women's position in society.¹⁸

The roots of Yiddish theater lay in European Purim *shpiels* (plays) that were first presented in the 16th century and developed throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. As the Purim season lasted a short time, performers in the troupes that formed to tour communities giving *shpiels* at Purim time could not subsist on acting, and worked in other trades the remainder of the year. The plays were generally accepted in the unconventional spirit of hilarity and spoof that surrounded Purim, but some strictly Orthodox Jews objected to the raucous nature of the performances. It was, of course, considered immodest for a woman to sing, and even more so to perform on stage; instead, men would play female characters. That, too, countermanded halakhah, for according to the Torah, men were forbidden to dress in women's clothing.¹⁹ Evidently, on Purim that particular restriction was dropped. Nevertheless, a few professional troupes in Yiddish-speaking 18th-century Europe included female members, and certain of these female singers, clowns or dancers did appear onstage. Fortunately, they were not considered actors, nor were they assigned specific characters in the official *shpiel*. Due to a lack of "acceptable material" (only Biblical stories were presented), an absence of community support and out of respect for Yiddish as an "artistic" language, it was not until the 19th century that Yiddish theater emerged as a respectable art form.²⁰

Indeed, with the rise of secular education for Jews and the development of the scientific study of Judaism, Yiddish theater finally entered the realm of what was considered "acceptable," and experienced its period of greatest growth. New plays were written, with new themes (e.g. love stories and folk tales), and writing for the theater became a more popular pursuit. A fresh breeze of intellectual independence had blown over the Jews of Central and

Yiddish Polemical Pamphlets of Amsterdam Jewry, 1797-1798 (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press), 2002.

18 Gerald Sorin. *The Jewish People in America: A Time for Building: The Third Migration 1880-1920* (Baltimore: the Johns Hopkins University Press), 1992: 101.

19 Deuteronomy 22: 5.

20 Nahma Sandrow, "Purim Plays," *Vagabond Stars: A World History of Yiddish Theater* (New York: harper and Row), 1977: 18-20.

Eastern Europe throughout the 19th century: the Haskalah, or Enlightenment. The question of what a woman's role should be, both in general and in Jewish society, became an important issue for Haskalah writers. Regardless of the new strides being made towards modernity, women's theater roles were still played by men until approximately 1877. At that time, Avrom Goldfadn, the self-dubbed "Father of Yiddish Theater," insisted that women play the female roles he wrote.

Several leading women were already active in Yiddish theater by 1877. One of them, a woman named "Rosa" who performed in Istanbul taverns, laid claim to being the first of her kind. (In this, she prefigured the Khazntes, all of whom would make the same assertion.) Actually, the first major actress was a young girl, Sara Segal, who ran away from home to join Goldfadn's troupe. In order to shield her from her parents' disapproval of women onstage, Goldfadn selected an unmarried actor from his troupe for her to marry. Sara did so, took her husband's last name, assumed a trendier first name and — enter Sophie Goldstein! This marriage of convenience was eventually dissolved and she remarried, once again to an actor, becoming Sophie Goldstein-Karp. Her daughter would eventually follow in her career footsteps.²¹

Family troupes were created in this way, and actor's wives were not only occasionally beckoned onstage, but became staples of productions. The appearance of women on the Yiddish stage may have taken many years, but swelled quickly in popularity. Once women showed what they could do onstage, the convention of men playing women's roles rapidly became outdated. The many actresses who soon appeared on the scene (now that the vocation was considered more suitable for women) married the male actors more often than not, for convenience if nothing else. In these family troupes, children would inevitably find themselves onstage as well, creating a tradition of Yiddish theater families. As in many professions, including that of the Khazntes, theater artists would pass down their skills (and connections) to the next generation.

Meanwhile, the "original" music that Goldfadn wrote for his musical plays drew on liturgical chants and opera motifs, walking a blurred line between sacred and profane. So popular were his published songs that it did not take long for the trend to reverse itself; Yiddish theater motifs soon infiltrated cantors' synagogue chants. Also, it became common practice to incorporate Hebrew prayers into Yiddish shows. These ranged from home rituals and marriage ceremonies to services for burials or holy days.²²

21 Sandrow, *Vagabond*, 1977: 52.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

Yiddish theater spread far and wide in Europe, troupes crossing borders regularly to perform. In 1882, Yiddish theater migrated to America when a play opened on the Lower East Side of New York. Several companies soon arrived, and by the turn of the century, performances took place regularly in Chicago and Philadelphia. England, France, Canada, South America and Australia got their first taste of Yiddish theater as well, but New York remained its international center, housing two major companies.²³ Although seeing Yiddish theater live onstage was a luxury that few of the poor Jewish immigrants could afford, they scrimped and saved enough for an advertised ticket and flocked to the major cities nearest them, enabling Yiddish theater touring companies to travel widely by 1910.²⁴ The values dramatized onstage were often religious ones, and thus the theater created a cultural sense of Jewishness (*Yiddishkeit*) to which even those eager to abandon Old Country ways and beliefs could still hold strong.²⁵ Female performers became role models not only for immigrant Jewish women, but for American women in general. Issues played out on the Yiddish theater stage included family matters in an acculturating immigrant American society: motherhood's nobility; prostitution's allure; and historical events such as the tragedy of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911, all of which highlighted women's plight.

In 1916, two Yiddish theaters, one in New York, the other in Chicago, mounted four-act productions on the then-taboo subject of birth control and its politics. The first of these productions opened just three months before Margaret Sanger, crusader for the legalization of birth control, was imprisoned for violating laws aimed at preventing the spread of contraceptive information. The legalization of birth control would not come about until a half-century later, between 1965 and 1972.²⁶ Some theater, however, was comic: mocking women in their struggle for equal rights; becoming doctors, politicians, and even rabbis and cantors. Women were often presented as either a nagging or dumb wife or as the quintessential Jewish mother. Nevertheless, the arts had become a means by which women could climb the social ladder in America. Yiddish theater had its own female stars, and women like Rhea Silberta and

23 Ibid., p. 68.

24 Baum et al, *Jewish Woman*, 1975: 95.

25 Nahma Sandrow, *Vagabond*, 1977: 77.

26 Jenna Weissman Joselit, *The Wonders of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture, 1880-1950* (New York: Hill and Wang), 1994: 64.

Augusta Zuckerman (who used the pen-name “Mana-Zucca”)²⁷ began writing Yiddish musicals and Jewish liturgical music as well.

Another venue for Jewish performers was Yiddish vaudeville. Working women, introduced to new notions of sexuality and autonomy, began to reconfigure and reconsider their responsibilities. Jewish women, no longer voiceless or powerless, began taking on some of the business-end positions of manager and agent, while still dealing with sexism and Jewish stereotypes. Onstage, they appeared in “pants parts” (dressed as men), in blackface, and in sexier settings than ever before.²⁸

Yiddish theater continued to develop both “high art” styles and *shund* styles (*shund*, meaning “trashy art” and generally referring to popular theater, was considered rubbish by the intellectuals, but beloved by the masses). One could attend plays in New York at a large variety of houses and see similar plots to those on Broadway or on the radio or in silent movies. In the years following World War I, Yiddish theater provided new opportunities along with other cultural institutions. But then, in the Great Depression of the 1930s, the number of Yiddish newspapers decreased along with the number of American newspapers. And afterwards, when the number of Yiddish speakers worldwide had been diminished by the loss of millions during the Shoah, assimilation took its toll. As a result, the regular use of Yiddish declined precipitously and English became the primary tongue among America’s Jews. Yiddish theater persisted into the 1950s, thanks to strong support from certain powerful and wealthy benefactors in the community as well as in the theater world itself.²⁹ By that time, Yiddish theater and related performances had moved to electronic media, including radio, recordings, movies and television.³⁰ While Yiddish theater still exists today, and although there is a current resurgence of and interest in Yiddish culture and music, the Yiddish stage appears to have run

27 Irene Heskes, “Yiddish Musical Theater,” *Jewish Women in America: an Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. Paula E. Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore (New York: Routledge), 1998: 1530-1531.

28 Peter Antelyes, “Vaudeville,” *Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. Paula E. Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore (New York: Routledge), 1998: 1437-1441.

29 Sandrow, *Vagabond*, 1977: 300.

30 Adrienne Fried Block and Irene Heskes, “Music,” *Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. Paula E. Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore, (New York: Routledge), 1998: 951-958.

its course by 1960. Still, as the Purim *spielers* might remind us, even in ancient Persia “the opposite happened” most unexpectedly for the Jews...³¹

Yiddish theater and vaudeville provided vehicles to stardom for many female performers, beginning with Goldfadn’s first actress (Sophie-Sara Goldstein-Karp) to stars like Bessie Thomashefsky, Celia Adler, Sophie Tucker, Nellie Casman, and the unforgettable Molly Picon. In one recording, Picon imitates the florid runs of a cantor, a skill in which the Khazntes excelled. Their world crossed and/or joined paths with Yiddish theater: Fraydele Oysher performed in plays and musicals written for her, often in pants parts;³² Mimi Sloan comprised half of the duo “The Feder Sisters;”³³ and Bas Sheva joined them among performers featured in the vaudeville act-turned-movie “Catskill Honeymoon.”³⁴ Yiddish radio featured such artists; Sheindele,³⁵ Fraydele, and Perele were among its major attractions. The Khazntes may be considered an offshoot of Yiddish theater or vaudeville, but in truth their careers more closely paralleled the rise and fall of the Golden Age cantorate. Additionally, it was through the use of cantorial music that the Khazntes found their unique niche. Yiddish theater legitimized not only women’s issues, but also its female performers. While some Khazntes feigned disdain for the secular music performed on the Yiddish stage, many included it in their repertoire, and all certainly owed a debt to the field. The institution of Yiddish theater thus laid the foundation for all Jewish women who would eventually perform onstage.

Khazntes from the 1920s to the 1970s and Beyond

The Khazntes were active mostly from the 1920s to the 1970s. Great changes occurred within the duration of the phenomenon itself, paralleling the ones taking place during that period in American music. Each Khaznte possessed a unique voice and pursued a unique path. The differences between their careers were partly due to their individual strengths and style, but also due to the different decades in which they sang. It is therefore valuable to detail and trace the development of these extraordinary women beginning with Sophie Kurtzer in the 1920s and ending with Mimi Sloan in the 1970s.

31 The Book of Esther 9: 1.

32 Fraydele Oysher archive, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York, New York.

33 Mimi Sloan, interviews, November 2004 through January 2005.

34 Mark Hausman, interviews, January 2005.

35 Jean Gornish archive, National Museum of American Jewish History, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The phenomenon of the Khazntes can be said to have officially started with the first woman to record *hazzanut*, Sophie Kurtzer, the so-called “Lady Cantor Madam Sophie Kurtzer from Odessa,” whose 1924-1925 recordings proved one of a kind. At the beginning of the phenomenon a unique talent such as Sophie Kurtzer’s could take off in modest style, that is, to find success on a small scale, not ruffling too many masculine feathers while making her mark as a performer. Though she gained popularity with an accepting public, her performances didn’t range very far, nor did she branch out into all the media forms then available. Kurtzer did produce a few 78 rpm recordings, but she did not enjoy the kinds of opportunities that would later present themselves: Long Playing records; or leading roles in movies or television.

With very little information available one can only guess about the public response (if any) to such an unusual performer. We do have one indicator; during the 1920s in America, at the cusp of slowly-changing beliefs regarding women’s roles in society, for Kurtzer to record *hazzanut* and have it survive in 21st-century compilations of “classic cantorial recordings” was a major accomplishment. Her singing must have left a definite impression. Had there been a huge public outcry at the concept, it might have found its way into a publication. Perhaps Kurtzer’s low-key entrance into the spotlight laid a foundation on which other Khazntes built. Or perhaps it was the *lack* of such a spotlight that allowed her to record, away from critical reviews that might have stopped such a groundbreaker in her tracks. Kurtzer’s voice, while still mimicking a tenor’s, remained high and unmistakably female, akin to that of Mimi Sloan, the last of the Khazntes, minus the Broadway “belting” sound and large orchestral accompaniment used by Sloan in the 1970s. Kurtzer’s particular voice-type and technique must be noted in any discussion of the early Khazntes. Were her voice any higher, she might not have been able to avoid mimicking a man’s sound. With a lower voice such as that of Perele Feig, Kurtzer’s mimicry might have been sufficiently accurate to cause a backlash of public opinion and prevent the future phenomenon from ever happening.

Following Sophie Kurtzer’s breakthrough, the Khazntes phenomenon enjoyed years of comfort while the public sought new forms and new quantities of entertainment. People remained accustomed to, yet intrigued by their craft. For their part the Khazntes generated controversy by pushing the envelope — appearing in more media forms, expanding repertoire to include non-liturgical music, and touring more and more cities. While continuing to record, Perele Feig began appearing as an entertainer in synagogues and concert halls. So accurate was her imitation of Cantor Zevulun (Zavel) Kwartin’s vocal style and mannerisms on her 78 rpm recording of his famous

composition, *Tiher Rabi Yishmoel Atsmo* (“Rabbi Ishmael Purified Himself”), that listeners refused to believe it was not Kwartin himself recording under a pseudonym to increase sales. These non-believers filled every hall where Perele sang, in order to convince themselves otherwise.

When Fraydele Oysher began in Yiddish theater, women had been performing in it for several decades. But there she found a new opportunity to sing hazzanut. It was already considered permissible — even in the late 1920s and early 1930s — for women to perform on the Yiddish stage, and due to the comedic nature of many of the productions, behavior that would normally be frowned upon was instead smiled upon. Fraydele would dress as a boy or man and, while mimicking a bar mitzvah student or cantor, was able to sing hazzanut and still remain in character. Her niche was a uniquely safe place to perform such music. It ensured her of an audience which already expected to see women onstage, to which hazzanut was somewhat a novelty, as opposed to an audience of straightforward concert hazzanut that might have reacted to her performance of it with shock or disapproval. Additionally, Fraydele’s relationship to her brother Moishe Oysher — famous for his roles in Yiddish films — granted her additional star status, further demonstrating the importance of that specific time period (as the sun set on the American cantorate’s Golden Age) to the success of the Khazntes phenomenon. Fraydele’s dual strengths of Yiddish playacting and hazzanut gave her broad access to stage opportunities; playwrights wrote scripts to showcase both talents. During her career, she encountered some criticism for seemingly ignoring halakhah, but with her humorous and comically immodest/aggressive nature she laughed at her detractors’ comments, daring anyone to prevent her from following her art. Thanks to her popularity, Fraydele was able to record several LPs and appear regularly on the radio.

At this same time — the early 1940s — Sheindele was independently making her way as a contralto in Philadelphia, performing hazzanut in legitimate concert venues. Initially she presented the Hebraic material along with other music of the day and age, but she soon devoted herself solely to singing liturgical pieces dedicated to her fellow Jews who were suffering and dying under the Nazis in Europe. Sheindele also *educated* her audiences, explaining the meaning and nuances of each liturgical selection. Her serious nature and insistence upon high standards for her art evoked public reaction, including a 1946 letter to the editor of an unnamed Midwestern newspaper, in which the irate reader vented his wrath upon the entire concept of female cantors.

We had a situation here recently in which the press announced a “strictly Orthodox service” in which a chazante would officiate. Assuming it is proper for a woman to lead at an Orthodox service — I leave that to our

rabbis — why hippodrome the affair? I shouldn't be surprised if next year some enterprising congregation, strictly Orthodox, were to announce a Kol Nidre service led by the Dionne quintuplets.³⁶

This occurred a mere nine years before the first female cantor was appointed to a pulpit, and only 29 years before the first female cantor was invested by a seminary. Sheindele persevered in the face of it, garnering huge critical praise for her emotional and prayerful renditions of the liturgy. This made her a desirable commodity for drawing clients to various hotels, year after year, where she sang Passover and High Holy Day services alongside major cantors of the day. A new male cantor would be hired each year, but Sheindele endured as the mainstay. From this, one might state that Sheindele was a groundbreaker in her own light, as she came closer than any other Khaznte to functioning as a true *sh'liah tsibbur*. In addition to her LP recording and participation in select prayer services, her weekly Philadelphi-based radio show for Planters Hi-Hat Peanut Oil helped make the Khazntes a known entity among thousands of Yiddish-speaking listeners.

Bas Sheva's arrival on the scene represents perhaps the pinnacle of the Khazntes phenomenon. With a low and rich voice she managed to succeed in every pursuit during her all-too-short 37 years of life. She included more secular music in her repertoire, performed in concerts, made recordings, starred on Broadway and succeeded in film and on television. In the aftermath of World War II, hotels in upstate New York catered to Jewish couples and families, and there Bas Sheva found a community of people who reminisced longingly about the cantorial sounds they had heard in Eastern Europe. For her it was the most welcoming audience imaginable. Her television experience was a bit different. After her first sensational guest stint on the *Ed Sullivan Show* a group of Orthodox rabbis petitioned Sullivan to deny her any further television appearances. An unusually high rate of audience approval brought her back again, and Bas Sheva's interpretations of *hazzanut* earned her wide acceptance everywhere.

Finally, as the Khazntes' novelty wore off and fans of *hazzanut* moved on to other forms of entertainment, the era came to a close with one last hurrah. Mimi Sloan supplied it, relying on the most popular hits recorded by Moishe Oysher, while presenting herself in the latest style. By the 1970s only a performer as strong and as adaptable as Sloan could recreate the novelty of women singing liturgical music 50 years after they first attempted it in public. Moreover, she did so in an era when *hazzanut* was no longer popular. Mimi

³⁶ Non-headed news clipping discovered by the author in Jean Gornish archive, National Museum of American Jewish History, Philadelphia, PA, dated October 4, 1946.

Sloan had performed alongside Bas Sheva in “Catskill Honeymoon,” and with her own sister on television and in Yiddish theater back in the 1950s. She didn’t begin to sing hazzanut until the 1970s, a decade after Bas Sheva’s premature death. Fraydele and Sheindele were still performing hazzanut, but the audiences were changing. The American cantorate’s Golden Age had come to its close a generation before, and music that was now deemed popular no longer included hazzanut.

Luckily, the late Moishe Oysher’s syncopated style of liturgical singing had become the stuff of legend through his recordings. So when Sloan’s husband received permission from Oysher’s wife, Theodora, for Mimi to perform Moishe’s arrangements, it guaranteed a steady income. Mimi’s vocal feats in imitating Moishe Oysher’s intricate and musically demanding ornamental style were stunning; she became a brand-new novelty within the Khazntes’ novelty. Mimi exuded 1970s glamour on her album covers, comparable to Cher’s on the *Sonny and Cher Show*. She sang with a brassy Broadway sound and did not mimic the male voice nearly as much as her predecessors had done, although the comparison could easily be made due to the nature of the music and vocal nuances one must include within the style. By her day, women were able to become cantors, yet Mimi states specifically that she never considered the path.³⁷ She remained a performer, clinging to her Yiddish theater heritage. Her voice was strong and feminine at once, a product of the changing face of popular music in America.

The Khazntes’ continued performances into the 1990s — in smaller venues — was logical, considering that their fan base — somewhat diminished but still a sufficient audience in major Jewish areas — was still interested in hearing them. The lack of later women stars can be attributed to the changes in popular music and the general decline of hazzanut in American synagogues. More importantly, it was due to the investiture of female cantors in the 1970s and 1980s, which made the art more common and the Khazntes’ niche obsolete.

The Khazntes as Ground-Breakers

Although a female cantor, Betty Robbins, served at Oceanside, New York’s Temple Avodah in 1955,³⁸ the Khazntes saw concerts and recordings as their only outlet for liturgical singing. Most of them attested to the fact that they neither desired to serve as actual cantors nor did they regard themselves as

37 Mimi Sloan, interviews, November 2004 through January, 2005.

38 Sandra Robbins, “Robbins, Betty,” *Jewish Women*, 1998: 1158-1159.

cantors. Sheindele's nephew, Rabbi Harvey Gornish, offers a contrary opinion. He believes that his aunt sublimated her true desire to be a cantor by becoming an entertainer,³⁹ and when feasible, by having herself billed as co-officiant alongside major cantors of the day at hotels' High Holy Day and Passover services. Fraydele Oysher insisted she would never serve as a cantor. Her daughter, performer Marilyn Michaels, insists that even after women were invested as cantors by Hebrew Union College neither she nor her mother ever desired to enter the field.⁴⁰ Fraydele was quoted as saying that although she had been offered the opportunity to sing in a Reform congregation (the identity of which is unknown), she declined, preferring instead "to remain on the stage, bringing the sound of the Synagogue to best taste, rather than trying to take a man's place at the pulpit."⁴¹ Mimi Sloan, who first performed *hazzanut* decades after the others and could have attended cantorial school if she wished, stated that the concept of becoming a cantor never entered her mind, and that she was happy simply being an entertainer.⁴²

Regardless of their statements, it is informative to compare the Khazntes to the women who followed them into the professional cantorate. The short time that elapsed between their phenomenon and the investiture of the first female cantor connects them historically. Public statements that the Khazntes made regarding their lack of aspirations toward the cantorate may have been influenced by pressure to conform to societal norms and expectations for a Jewish woman's "proper" role generally and "proper" use of voice in the public arena. At the same time, the Khazntes were breaking those norms and thwarting those expectations by performing, broadcasting and recording liturgical music theretofore performed in synagogue only by men.

Nor did they regard themselves as fighters for women's rights. A biography of Fraydele Oysher states that she didn't

think of or refer to herself as a pioneer of feminism. However, long before...women were embraced as rabbis and cantors in synagogues throughout the world, Fraydele Oysher is the woman who played the major role in paving this new road for women.⁴³

Thus an unidentified, though presumably neutral, observer links at least one Khaznte to upcoming female cantors. Perhaps the unknown author's appraisal

39 Harvey Gornish, November 2004 interview.

40 Marilyn Michaels, August 2004 interview.

41 "A *Chazendel auf Shabbes*" program notes, date unknown.

42 Mimi Sloan, interviews, November 2004 through January, 2005.

43 Fraydele Oysher biography, author unknown, found at <http://www.marilynmichaels.com/fraydele.htm> on the Internet.

of the role that Fraydele's career played in influencing the next generation's female cantors' choice of profession is exaggerated. What we do know is that each Khaznte had a different opinion about the cantorate, and that, had they been permitted to function as a part of it, the course their lives took would not necessarily have been altered. Be that as it may, it is this writer's conviction that the Khazntes are clearly linked to the institution of the female cantor.

It cannot be proven that they either opened doors for other women or even made efforts to do so, yet with time comes historical perspective. One might posit that the phenomenon of the Khazntes was a harbinger of the times; women were increasingly being accepted as stage performers, a feminist wave was inundating the country, and opportunities in the burgeoning field of entertainment constantly beckoned. Others might point out with some accuracy that the *timing* of the phenomenon's appearance was fundamental: the typically American trend toward a "Modern" Orthodoxy exemplified by the Young Israel movement had not yet tightened the restrictions of halakhah around its adherents; the cantorate's Golden Age continued to glow brightly, and the notion of Jewish female performers was still fresh. Regardless of what brought the phenomenon to the scene in the early-to-mid twentieth century, the Khazntes' accomplishments played an important role in the history of women, particularly Jewish women. The Khazntes were more than just entertainers; they demonstrated that women could effectively communicate prayer through their voices.

It would take many more years for women to be widely accepted as cantors, but audiences around the world listened with enthusiasm as these women sang liturgical chants. True, in order to "authenticate" their *hazzanut* most of the Khazntes manipulated their voices to sound like men, especially in the upper range. Yet, unlike certain notorious female synagogue choristers of the era parading as men, the Khazntes never hid their gender; they performed as women, they were advertised as women, and their recordings bore their images. And again, some of the Khazntes donned male garb (Fraydele dressed as a Yeshiva boy or male cantor with *payes* (side-curls), *tzitzit* (fringed garments) and a suit — and Sheindele donned the male cantor's garb of mitre (cantor's headdress, also worn by bishops) and *kitl* (robe) — but they did so either for theater performances or for publicity photos. Most of them performed in feminine concert attire, as can be seen on videos and other photos. They did not try to be men, but instead forged their own unique paths in the world of Jewish entertainment.

The Khazntes made great strides for all women in Yiddish theater, on concert stages, recordings, radio, and even movies. The one area in which they

never overstepped the line was in serving as cantors in synagogues. While Sheindele co-officiated with male cantors at hotel services during holy days, and Mimi Sloan co-conducted communal Passover seders, none of them sought regular positions in the synagogue. Before Barbara (Horowitz) Ostfeld was invested by Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in 1975, only Betty Robbins had taken a pulpit without investiture, in 1955. In the majority of synagogues across the denominational board, women would not have been accepted as cantors, either by congregants or by their own supportive families. The Khazntes' devotion to singing liturgical repertoire in public was the critical first step towards recognizing women as potential *sh'lihei tsibbur*.

They filled an historical gap between the *zogerin* who led women in separate prayer services in medieval Europe, and the arrival of female cantors late in the 20th century.

Personal Conclusion

That the Khazntes' example proved inspirational to many others is a fact that can be verified by the enduring interest shown in concert presentations of their music. I am speaking here from recent personal experience, having accepted numerous invitations to lecture on the Khazntes' careers, to play their recordings and to demonstrate their approach. At these events, I am sometimes lucky enough to meet people who listened to the Khazntes on the radio or who heard them perform in concert. Even the local ice cream man in Brooklyn had a story of listening to Fraydele and her brother Moishe practice in their apartment, which was conveniently located directly across the air shaft of his apartment building. It is my belief that the Khazntes' ultimate legacy will be to create in young people a newfound interest in a body of Jewish music that is slipping farther and farther into oblivion. It is my hope that the Khazntes will become a topic more often covered in discussions of female Jewish performers and the influence they've had on a still developing American Jewish culture.

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Kol Hazzanit: Alternatives for Women Cantors to the Vocal Requirements and Expression of Traditional Hazzanut

by Pamela Kordan Trimble

After the supper they hold the sacred vigil that is conducted in the following way. They rise up all together and standing in the middle of the refectory form themselves first into two choirs, *one of men and one of women*, the leader and precentor chosen from each being the most honoured amongst them and also the most musical. Then they sing hymns to God composed of many measures and set to many melodies, sometimes *chanting together*, sometimes taking up the harmony *antiphonally*, hands and feet keeping time in accompaniment, and rapt with enthusiasm reproduce sometimes the lyrics of the procession, sometimes of the halt and of the wheeling and counter-wheeling of a choice dance. Then when each choir has separately done its own part in the feast... they mix and *both together become a single choir*, a copy of the choir set up of old besides the Red Sea in honour of the wonders there wrought... It is on this model above all that the choir of the Therapeutae of *either sex*, note in response to note and voice to voice, the bass of *the men blending with the treble of the women*, create a harmonious concert (*symphonia*), music in the truest sense...¹

Introduction

This article explores a subject that to my knowledge has not been discussed before. I was unable to find any documentation on it, and as of yet there has been no book written specifically on the subject of women in the cantorate. My specific concern here is to consider the heritage of traditional hazzanut from a distinctly female perspective, in order to integrate into this musical style a female vocal expression and the unique spiritual perspective and energy of women in the cantorate today.

Historian Alfred Sendrey offers documentation about the role women played in the sacred and secular music of ancient Israel. Written records as well as pictorial displays testify to the various activities of women as dancers, singers and instrumentalists.²

1 Alfred Sendrey, *Music in Ancient Israel* (New York: Philosophical Library), 1969: 188-189, 526-527, citing Philo's essay on the communal Sabbath observances of the Jewish Monastic sect called *Therapeutae* (Greek: healers:) in their settlement near Alexandria, particularly their night-long singing and dancing following the friendship-and-love meal known as *agape*.

2 Sendrey, *Music in Ancient Israel*, 1969: 516

In the First Temple, women regularly participated in the ritual as singers and instrumentalists.³

David and the captains of the army appointed for service in the Sanctuary the children of Asaph, of Heman and of Jeduthun, who prophesied to the accompaniment of lyres, harps and cymbals ... God gave Heman fourteen sons and *three daughters; all these were under the charge of their father for singing in the House of God by order of the king.*

The development of anti-feminine sentiment among the priestly caste and the anti-feminine tendency of the later priestly scribes influenced the gradual displacement of women from any ritual functions, and effaced or so transformed our original sources that any record of the roles women shared in the sacred service were obscured forever.⁴

The only other historical information recorded on women's participation in what later developed into the professional cantorate, is in the European communities of Nuremberg and Worms of the 13th century, where women led services for other women, in sections of the synagogue that were either adjacent to the men's section or at times connected by a gallery.⁵ Women who were musically talented and knowledgeable in the liturgy were engaged to lead these services. Two of these women are remembered by name: Richenza of Nurenberg and Urania of Worms.⁶ The epitaph on the tombstone of Urania reads: "This headstone commemorates the eminent and excellent lady Urania, the daughter of R. Abraham, who was the chief of the synagogue singers. His prayer for his people rose up to glory. And as to her, she, too, with sweet tunefulness, officiated before the female worshipers to whom she sang the hymnal portions. In devout service her memory shall be preserved."⁷

Although the above would indicate that women have performed in Jewish religious services in various capacities in ancient times and as recently as the 13th century, there is no precedent for women having performed traditional hazzanut, an improvisational liturgical style that developed at a much later date, exclusively for the male voice.

3 First Chronicles 25: 5-6 (my emphases).

4 Sendrey, p. 516.

5 Leo Landman. *The Cantor — An Historical Perspective* (New York: Yeshiva University), 1972: 68.

6 Idem.

7 Idem.

Physiological functions of the male and female singing voices

One really cannot pursue a project of this type without including a certain amount of discussion regarding vocal production. With such demanding vocal criteria required as an integral part of the prayer expression in the style of traditional hazzanut, the hazzan, whether female or male, should strive to acquire the proper physical function in order that he/she could express the text with as many vocal colors as possible, developing, within one's own range of vocal talent, the required set of vocal criteria.

The lungs and diaphragm and the whole breathing apparatus must be understood by the singer, because the foundation of singing is breathing and breath control... A singer must be able to rely on her/his breath, just as he/she relies upon the solidity of the ground beneath his/her feet.⁸

Now let us consider what is technically known as the Valsalva Maneuver, because this aspect of pulmonary and thoracic mechanics appears to be evident as an essential function in the vocal technique of Eastern European Ashkenazic hazzanim who flourished during the so-called Golden Age of hazzanut, roughly 1900-1940. This is the period of time during which most of the liturgical music I discuss in this article was composed and originally sung.

I interviewed Dr. Maurice Sheetz, a Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine Fellow at St. Luke's/Roosevelt Hospital in New York City. He was able to identify and define for me, by listening to recordings of Golden Age cantors Gershon Sirota, Yossele Rosenblatt, Zavel Kwartin, Pierre Pinchik, Leib Glantz, David Kusevitsky, Moshe Ganchoff, David Roitman and Mordecai Hershman, and recordings of Bel Canto opera singers Enrico Caruso, Mattia Battistini, Georges Thill, Fernando De Lucia, Nellie Melba, Louisa Tetrazzini, Lilli Lehmann, Zinka Milanov and Rosa Ponselle, a particular type of breathing.

It's an audible function that we singers would call a type of "breath support" technique: the Valsalva (or Valsalva-like) Maneuver, common to the vocalism of each of the above-named artists. Dr. Sheetz described this function as a "...controlled expiration of the breath against a closed glottis." The opposite, the Mueller Maneuver, which consists of inspiration against a closed glottis, can also be heard, incorporated into the singing technique of these great singers. One can hear very clearly the incorporation of the Valsalva Maneuver on the recordings of all these singers as a breath pressure cut-off, a type of

8 Luisa Tetrazzini, *The Art of Singing* (New York: Dover edition), 1975: 11.

audible “grunt” at the end of the phrase, and with the Mueller Maneuver, a short but audible “grunt” at the beginning of a phrase. The latter is a method of “setting” or leaning the breath and singing against the chest, establishing the *appoggio* or breath “prop.”⁹

The *appoggio* is the deep breath regulated by the diaphragm; no singer can really acquire high notes or flexibility or strength of tone without the attack coming from this seat of respiration.¹⁰ This type of breath support function allowed the cantors and opera singers of that unique period in vocal history to develop a remarkable ability to use the eight criteria of Bel Canto singing, endowing them with a vast spectrum of vocal, emotional and spiritual expression. One still hears this technique on the recordings of Cantor Moshe Ganchoff and in the performances of Cantors Israel Goldstein and Robert Abelson. The eight criteria that define the art of Bel Canto singing are:

- 1) legato;
- 2) staccato;
- 3) soft;
- 4) loud;
- 5) high;
- 6) low;
- 7) coloratura;
- 8) trills.

Luisa Tetrazzini, one of the most famous of Bel Canto coloratura sopranos, explains this breath-pressure function in her book. She kept the pressure of the breath against her sternum at all times and that allowed her vocal cords to remain free to vibrate. Dr. Sheetz described it rather colorfully:

It's like saying that at one end of your body you've this tremendous pressure of breath against your sternum, but at the same time you are learning to relax the muscles from the neck up... There are these little muscles that surround the vocal cords, the ones in the back that change the length and tension of your cords are called the Arytenoids. What happens is that you build up pressure against your sternum; then you have to learn how to relax the muscles surrounding the vocal cords so that you can open your throat and at the same time slowly release some of the pressure, not all of the expiration, directly against your vocal cords. It's analogous to banking a pool ball off a side cushion instead of going directly through; you

9 Tetrazzini, p. 15.

10 Ibid; p. 16.

somehow divert that air so that it goes through in a controlled amount, as little as possible.

Johan Sundberg spends a third of his book on the scientific underpinning of singing¹¹ in discussing the type of breathing evidenced by a “grunt” at cut-off. He calls it sub-glottal pressure, involving the balance of equal and opposite muscular activity required to produce not only the healthy singing tone but the different dynamics possible to the vocal organ.

To observe the Valsalva-like Maneuver function, one can watch a baby cry. When a baby cries, the abdominal wall moves in on inhalation and presses out on exhalation, whereas when the baby is resting or sleeping, the abdominal wall moves out for inhalation and in for exhalation. Thus, the normal breathing function is reversed. Caruso describes it in these terms:

To take a full breath properly the chest must be raised at the same moment the abdomen sinks in. Then with the gradual expulsion of the breath a contrary movement takes place. ... It is this ability to take in an adequate supply of breath and retain it until required that makes or, by contrary, mars all singing... This art of respiration once acquired, the student has gone a considerable step on the road to Parnassus.¹²

Lilli Lehmann describes proper respiration as follows: “I had learned this: to draw in the abdomen and diaphragm, raise the chest and hold the breath in it by the aid of the ribs; in letting out the breath, gradually to relax the abdomen.”¹³

Another essential aspect of breath control is learning how to release as little breath as possible while singing. Giovanni Battista Lamperti was another of the great teaching Master’s of the art of Bel Canto. He believes that the challenge for a singer is to balance giving the breath and holding the breath at the same time; all problems with singing are a mismanagement of the breath. He discusses what he calls the force of the compressed breath and how to handle it.

The breath is the ocean — the voice is the boat that floats on the ocean! Nature gave us the voice — we cannot change it — but we can educate the breath and learn to control it. This — constitutes the whole method of singing.¹⁴

11 Johan Sundberg. *The Science of the Singing Voice* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press), 1987: Chapters 1 through 4.

12 Enrico Caruso. *The Art of Singing* (New York: Dover), 1975: 54-55

13 Lilli Lehman. *How to Sing* (New York: MacMillan), 1949:14.

14 Giovanni Battista Lamperti *Vocal Wisdom* (New York: Taplinger), 1931: 131-132

While singing in Europe I was introduced to a very interesting and effective vocal exercise; legend has it that it was an exercise used by Caruso for controlling the emission of breath. One holds a lit candle flame close to the mouth, and attempts to sing at different dynamic levels while keeping the candle flame absolutely steady. In doing this, the singer learns to control the emission of breath with the musculature of intra-thoracic pressure and diaphragmatic function. If done properly, it is a very useful exercise.

The Valsalva-like Maneuver allows male singers to use the *krekhitz* (Yiddish: “sob”) very effectively as another tool for emotional expression. The *krekhitz*, however, is not natural to the female voice.

If one listens and then compares the singing of Cantors Pinchik and Sirota, one hears that Pinchik did not possess as great a natural vocal instrument as did Sirota. Despite this fact, Pinchik could achieve the same expressive results when expression demanded it. He did it by implementing the breath-support function discussed above. However different their vocal timbre, Pinchik and Sirota had one thing in common: their use of the Valsalva-like Maneuver, audible on their recordings, to impart expressiveness to their singing.

In comparing books on Bel Canto singing, one is convinced that there was at that time a traditional way that one learned to sing, an aesthetic that one recognized and strived to attain, to the best of one’s ability. It is no accident that the era of Bel Canto and the Golden Age of hazzanut followed each other historically. One wonders what conditions were present that allowed this to happen; that such marvelous singing should thrive sequentially in two different worlds of expression: in the world of Italian opera and the world of synagogue prayer. One also wonders what might have been achieved hazzanically if, at that time, women had been allowed to serve as cantors.

Vocal Tradition for Women: Where Do We Start?

Women have no vocal tradition in the style of traditional hazzanut. So where does one turn to study good vocal writing specifically for women, vocal writing that would suggest a type of vocal expression similar to that already present in the singing tradition of Eastern European hazzanut, but better suited to the vocal instruments of women? The answer, for me, was to begin studying the vocal writing of master composers like Bach, Mozart, Bellini, Bizet and Verdi. I analyzed how they specifically set *prayer* to music, how they tailored that type of singing for each female voice *fach* (German: “category”).

In the operatic tradition, women enjoy an established vocal history spanning hundreds of years; women have had the opportunity to communicate the

widest spectrum of emotions through a very special array of vocal colors and expressive devices representative of superlative vocal writing for the female voice. This sort of vocal mastery is cultivated over many years of serious study, through the process of classical voice training. I chose opera as my medium of exploration instead of, for instance, gospel singing, because the vocal and expressive criteria required of singers by the Bel Canto operatic repertoire is paralleled by the remarkable vocalism associated with Ashkenazic hazzanut of the early 1900s.

One must remember that just as Old School cantors wrote for themselves, composing settings of prayers to suit their own vocal abilities and religious personality, many of the operatic composers wrote individual roles for specific women. Composers often designed an entire role for the individual vocal abilities of a given female singer, creating a vocal line through which the artist could best express herself. The prima donna had always played a central and creative role in the development of opera. The operas *Norma* by Bellini and *Anna Bolena* by Donizetti were composed for the vocal genius of Guiditta Pasta; the capabilities of Schroder-Devrient. Stolz and Jeritza were exploited to their full by Wagner, Verdi and Richard Strauss, respectively.¹⁵ In our own day Luciano Berio entrusted Cathy Berberian with music that left a great deal to her own improvisation. Donizetti wrote his most famous tragic opera, *Lucia di Lamermoor*, for Fanny Persiani; Giuseppina Strepioni created the role of Abigail in Verdi's first real success, *Nabucco*, a role he composed expressly for her.¹⁶ Just as these composers wrote music that played to the strengths of individual women, so did the hazzanim of Eastern Europe a century ago write for themselves, using the improvisational style of traditional hazzanut to express their individual religious sentiment through their own unique vocalism.

In examining operatic writing I kept the following textual and vocal considerations in mind.

- 1) *Tessitura* (general positioning of the vocal line): i.e., how this reflects the text; whether the high voice was used more for emotional outbursts and the middle voice used more for recitative-type expression.
- 2) *Passaggio* (vocal register-break, mainly between middle and upper ranges): i.e., does the composer write repeated notes in the *passaggio* for the female voice, and if so, towards what expressive end?

15 Rupert Christiansen. *Prima Donna* (New York: Viking), 1985: 8.

16 Ibid. p. 216.

- 3) Vowels/Diction: whether certain vowels are avoided in certain parts of the vocal range; how the vowels are used to express the text in different *tessituri*.
- 4) Phrasing: the use of legato, staccato, contour (rests vs. motion), runs and sustained notes.
- 5) Dynamics: how the text is expressed through the use of piano, forte, sforzando, crescendo and diminuendo.
- 6) Tempi/Rhythm: how tempo and rhythm are used to enhance the text's meaning.
- 7) Embellishments: how coloratura, trills and grace notes are used to emphasize the music's emotional subtext.

In addition, each of the operatic prayer-setting examples I studied reflects a defineable religious sentiment.

- 1) "Erbarne dich..." (Have mercy upon me...) from the *St. Matthew Passion* by J.S. Bach: A prayer of specific entreaty.
- 2) "Ave Maria..." from *Otello* by Verdi: A prayer of general supplication. This is one of the most beloved arias in the entire operatic repertoire.
- 3) "Alleluja..." from *Exsultate, Jubilate*, Motet, K. 165 by Mozart: A song of praise.
- 4) ... *s'ancor si piange* (from within the aria "Tu che le vanita"; from *Don Carlo* by Verdi: A desperate supplication.
- 5) "Pie Jesu..." from *Requiem* by Faure: A gentle plea.
- 6) "Possente..." prayer of the High Priestess, from *Aïda* by Verdi; a hymn of affirmation and beseeching.
- 7) *Numi, pieta...* (from within the aria "Ritorna Vincitor") from *Aida* by Verdi: passionate invocation.
- 8) "Casta Diva..." from *Norma* by Bellini: praise, thanksgiving.
- 9) "Madonna benedetta..." from *La Bohème*, Act IV, by Puccini: an intimate prayer chant.
- 10) *Vous me donnerez* (from within the aria "Je dis, que rien ne m'épouvante") from *Carmen* by Bizet: one of the great moments in opera, a religious affirmation of exquisite beauty.
- 11) "Libera me..." from the *Requiem* by Verdi: declamatory exaltation to hushed meditation.
- 12) "Requiem Eternam..." *Requiem* by Verdi: ethereal assurance, incorporating a remarkably lyrical vocal line with the classic female vocal device of the high floating pianissimo.

- 13) “Vissi d’arte,” the heroine’s signature aria from *Tosca* by Puccini, in which a woman speaks directly to God, questioning, asking why such a horrible fate has befallen her (which indeed it has)... “Why, why, O God, have you paid me back this way?” In the opening of the aria, Tosca says she has lived for art and love, daily performing good deeds; why, then, she cries, do you abandon me now? Despairing, she does not pray for mercy, but raises a fist, vocally. This is a very unusual stance for women in opera.

Among present-day compositions, Cantor Lawrence Avery’s setting of *Ribono Shel Olam*¹⁷ displays very effective and sensitive vocal writing, and was composed specifically for a woman’s voice. Dr. Samuel Adler, in a telephone interview, explained to me that he composed both “Ahavat Olam” from *Shir Chadash* and “Sim Shalom” from *Shiru Ladonay* specifically for a woman’s voice. After studying both pieces, I found both selections to be written with feminine aesthetic and vocal criteria in mind. He also composed several beautiful prayers for the Rachel and Leah characters in his opera, *The Wrestler*.

Specific characteristics of men’s and women’s voices

In general, the male singer has thicker vocal cords — from top to bottom — than the female singer. A man also has a naturally greater vital breath capacity than a woman.¹⁸ For example, a man’s vocal cords will be thicker than a woman’s of the same voice weight and category: i.e. lyric tenor vs lyric soprano, or dramatic tenor vs dramatic soprano. Because the vocal cords are thicker, the male singer has to apply more sub-glottal pressures to cause the vocal cords to vibrate.

Therefore, a male singer singing a specific *passaggio* passage — Eb-E-F-F# — is producing a steady stream of breath pressure that is greater than the stream of breath pressure produced by a female singer negotiating the same passage in her *passaggio*.¹⁹ Because a more intense pressure is already established in this *tessitura* of the voice of the male singer, it is easier for him to repeat syllables on a particular pitch in *this tessitura*. In addition, the male singer has the natural acoustical phenomenon called the “covered tone,” which occurs as the male voice passes through its *passaggio*, an effect that a female singer does not experience.

If properly produced, the female voice passes from the middle register to the head register with much less of an aural disruption, and with less sub-

17 *Gates of Prayer*, Chaim Stern, ed. (New York: Central Conference of America Rabbis), 1975: 679-680.

18 Sundberg, *Science of the Singing Voice*, 1987: 26.

19 *Ibid.* p. 34.

glottal pressure. In order to “speak” in that *tessitura* the female singer must generate additional pressure against her vocal cords, often producing a harsh “white” or open quality that can sound strained and unnatural to the listener. We must also remember that women do not speak in that range of the voice, whereas men can, and often do. The basic female singing voice is an octave above the male singing voice, so the acoustical phenomenon that occurs as the woman’s voice passes into the head register is dramatically different than that produced by the male voice in the same *tessitura*. It is also noted that the back of the throat of the female singer is much more open as she passes through the *passaggio* into the head register,²⁰ and hence must force an artificial closure of that throat position in order to produce clear diction on repeated notes in that *tessitura*. This contorts the healthy, natural vocal mechanism and produces an unpleasant sound.

The type of vocal writing for women that leads to this result is very rare in any of the operatic examples I examined during my research (not limited to the examples cited here). I did find passages that deliberately sought to produce this type of vocal effect; Puccini used it in *Madame Butterfly* and Verdi did likewise in *Aïda* and *Macbeth*. Both composers introduced it at dramatic moments, climactic points in the musical drama. If used judiciously it can simulate intense despair, anger, pain or even hysterical ecstasy. But again, it is extremely rare, and is found in the more dramatic repertoire for the spinto or dramatic soprano voice. Generally achieved by having a singer repeat words in the voice’s *passaggio* — either on one continuous note or moving between two or three notes — it is a very common compositional technique in traditional *hazzanut*. There it works well for the male voice but not for the female voice, for the reasons just discussed.

I wish to avoid any confusion at this point between the use of the terms “head voice,” “chest voice” and “registers.” They are not the same thing. Let me give you an example. If women were to speak as Julia Child or, for that matter, as Jesse Norman or the late Elizabeth Schumann, they would be using the “head voice” as a speaking vehicle. Most women, however, speak in their “chest voice”; it has become, certainly in the last fifty years, a more socially acceptable way of producing the female speaking voice, despite the fact that it is not as healthy a function for a woman, and certainly not as healthy for the professional singer. A register, on the other hand, is most commonly described as a phonation frequency range, in which all tones are perceived as being produced in a similar way, and which therefore possess a similar vocal

20 Lehmann, *How to Sing*, 1944: 62.

timbre.²¹ Dr. Harry Hollien (1974) defines vocal register in the following way: “a totally laryngeal event; it consists of a series or a range of consecutive voice frequencies which can be produced with nearly identical phonatory quality, ... there will be little overlap in fundamental frequency ... the operational definition of a register must depend on supporting perceptual, acoustic, physiologic and aerodynamic evidence.”²² In the male voice, one distinguishes between normal, or modal register, which is used for lower phonation frequencies, and falsetto register.²³

When a man is singing high notes in full voice, if he relaxes his diaphragmatic lean, or loses his support for a second, he does what we call cracking. Cracking is breaking from full voice back to an unsupported sound. An unsupported sound, where the breath releases and passes through the vocal cords without any resistance of any kind in the support system, produces what we call the falsetto. A falsetto is simply the fluttering of the edges of the vocal cords without any equalization process or resistance in the support system at all. If a woman loses, for a moment, her breath lean, a variety of things can happen, because the female voice is by nature produced by singing with more of the edges of the vocal cords vibrating, rather than, as in the male voice, more pressure against a larger area of the vocal cords.²⁴ If she cracks, she can produce a shrill, thin sound; she might even shriek, or her voice will stop singing altogether. In the male voice, however, if he cracks the singer will crack into falsetto, and he will continue singing in the falsetto function.

The falsetto is an incredibly effective expressive vocal tool when used creatively by the male singer. We hear it employed with great expertise by Yossele Rosenblatt and by many other great cantors of the early 20th century. Sometimes a male singer can begin a tone in the falsetto, blend into a full voice tone and then decrescendo, creating a beautiful pianissimo effect. If a male cantor or opera singer feels tired, or not in great voice, he has the opportunity to use the falsetto simply as a way to rest or save his voice. These are possibilities that a woman does not have available to her. Anything that one might call a falsetto in the female voice would be so thin that it would be unusable. A woman, then, even for the finest pianissimo, has to maintain her support for all vocal expression. Her vocal function does not allow her this resting technique.

21 Sundberg, *Science of the Singing Voice*, 1987:49

22 Ibid. p. 50.

23 Idem.

24 Ibid. p.51.

In the following quote, Lilli Lehmann reiterates her belief in the existence of falsetto in the male voice but not in the female voice. She also points out how the use of a particular singing effect, such as the falsetto in the male voice, comes in and out of vogue, depending on the era of singing.

Most male singers — tenors especially — consider it beneath them, generally, indeed, unnatural or ridiculous, to use the falsetto, which is a part of all male voices, as the head tones are a part of all female voices. They do not understand how to make use of its assistance, because they often have no idea of its existence, or know it only in its unmixed purity, that is, its thinnest quality. Of its proper application, that is, its necessary admixture with chest resonance, they have not the remotest conception. Their singing is generally in keeping with their ignorance.²⁵

The story goes that when Rossini first heard the famous French tenor Duprez sing a high C, initially *dal petto* (“from the chest”), he complained bitterly about how hideous it was and how he hated it. He could not abide male singers who tried to carry their chest or full voice all the way into the upper reaches of their range. Puccini, too, preferred the use of falsetto — or at least a supported falsetto — sometimes referred to as *voix mixe* (the “mixed tone”).

During the first quarter of the twentieth century there came into vogue something called *le petit ton inférieur*, “the small inferior tone.” This was a falsetto tone that preceded a full tone. The male singer would deliberately make a falsetto attack and then, by tightly closing the glottis, produce the full tone. Closing the vocal cords tightly would create a sudden resistance to the breath. This resistance would then be equalized by a corresponding pressure felt in the diaphragm. It is an application of Newton’s third Law of Motion, which states that for every action of a force there is an equal and opposite reaction. In this case the resistance, resulting from the closure of the glottis, causes this physical reaction, responded to immediately in the diaphragm. It gained the Italian name *il punto d’appoggio* (“the point of support”). In modern times it has come to be called just *appoggio*, referring to a more generalized support across the diaphragmatic area. In Spain, however, it is still called *el punto d’apoyo*. This type of support technique, initiated via *le petit ton inférieur* and completed by activating the diaphragm through closing the glottis, became very popular. As more and more volume was required, this function turned into the *krehtz* or “sob” that we associate with the singing of the great cantors and opera singers of past and present.

25 Lehmann, *How to Sing*, 1949: 124.

The register break that occurs when a man shifts from falsetto into the normal or modal register creates the effect that we call the *krekhitz*.²⁶ This abrupt and very audible vocal effect, used effectively and extensively by Ashkenazic cantors of the past century and by many Italian opera singers of the same historical period — including Enrico Caruso and Beniamino Gigli — is not a vocal device that works particularly well in the female voice. The female voice has four recognized registers: the chest register, the middle register, the head register, and the whistle register.²⁷ A woman has to set up an artificial or unnatural breath-pressure condition to approximate this dramatic shift downward from the head register into the middle register, for a “sob” effect. It occurs more naturally when she breaks from the middle register into the chest register. Women do not, however, sing in the chest voice as a general rule, because the expressive possibilities in that part of the female voice are extremely limited. Even in Broadway singing, where “belting” is a commonly used singing technique for women, the majority of the expressive vocal writing for the female voice is still found in the head voice.

In the woman's voice the middle register takes hold in the notes from E on the first line of the staff about to middle C. The head voice begins at middle C and runs up to the end of the voice, sometimes to B-flat or C, where it joins the second head register, which I have heard ascend into a whistle in phenomenal voices... In the high register the head voice, or voice which vibrates in the head cavities, should be used chiefly. The middle register requires palatal resonance, and the first notes of the head register and the last ones of the middle require a judicious blending of both. The middle register can be dragged up to the high notes, but always at the cost first of the beauty of the voice and then of the voice itself, for no organ can stand being used wrongly for a long time.²⁸

The widest spectrum of expressive possibilities for the female voice lies within the parameters of the head voice. Needless to say, the chest voice can be used for a special effect on occasion, but the head voice, certainly throughout the hundreds of years of operatic development, has endowed female singers with the widest variety of expressive possibilities. Liturgical composition for woman's voice therefore, demands an exploration of the possibilities of the upper notes of the female voice, the intention being to discover more and more ways to express a wider range of emotion and possible religious sentiment. When properly cultivated and developed, the female singer has at her disposal the uniquely beautiful high pianissimo, the *fil di voce* (“thin voice”),

26 Sundberg, *Science of the Singing Voice*, 1987: 57.

27 Ibid. p. 49.

28 Tetrizzini, *Art of Singing*, 1975: 21

the thrill of finely-tuned high coloratura spun on the barest vocal thread, and the brilliance of the well-produced trill with which to enhance the impact of the text at hand. These effects should be explored very deliberately and consciously, and then carefully interwoven into the texture of the vocal line.

Writing of the vocal line for liturgical texts must accommodate the clear communication of that text to the listener. As I have stated previously, a man's singing voice is very much an extension of his speaking voice. Women, on the other hand, tend to speak in the chest voice and then adjust to the head voice when they begin to sing. The male singer is more easily understood in the upper part of his voice than the female singer because he is heard an octave lower by the listener. A tenor can sing different syllables, vowels and consonants, in a higher *tessitura*, even high notes, and will be understood much more easily than a woman singing in that same higher *tessitura*. The head voice of the woman also takes on certain overtones that interfere with diction. When a woman attempts to exaggerate her pronunciation in the upper voice it can cause a reaction in the root of the tongue, in the throat or in the jaw, and can interfere with the breath support system in the body. Because of this interference, the higher notes can become pinched, tight and unpleasant in quality and timbre.

Perhaps, therefore, if the writing in the *passaggio* were to allow enough time for breath, relaxation and enunciation to control this reactive reflex, the female voice might be able to adjust. Women need more time to repeat vowels and consonants, particularly in the *passaggio*. This again has to do with the fact that less pressure is required by the female singer to produce these tones, and when an extra pressure is exerted to compensate for the diction, the tone will suffer. In my own arrangements, I rewrite the denser, repetitive part of the vocal line in a lower *tessitura*, and allow the voice to soar into the upper range on single notes for a more intense emotional response. This is the way that expression of emotion can be increased in the upper ranges of the female voice, while due consideration is still given whatever cantorial nuances have been written into the composition by its composer.

At the same time, let me state here that the problems with diction that arise for women cannot necessarily be alleviated by simply transposing a piece of music. Often the sentiment of the liturgical composition is lost when transposed. So, the approach to the music must be more selective in nature.

We have no way of knowing, at this point, what effect singing music that forces the voice to function unnaturally in the *passaggio* will have on the longevity of the female voice. This is a genuine concern, and needs to be dealt with by those who will attempt to rearrange cantorial music for the

female instrument. Caruso's following statement applies even more so to the expression of prayer texts: "Certainly no singer can be called a great artist unless his diction is good, for a beautiful voice alone will not make up for other deficiencies. A singer endowed with a small voice or even one of not very pleasing quality can give more pleasure than a singer possessing a big, impressive voice, but no diction."²⁹

Production of vowels in the different registers of any voice directly effects the quality and timbre of the sound produced. One of the most famous voice teachers of the Bel Canto era was Mathilde Marchesi, daughter of the renowned Manuel Garcia. She was the teacher of the great Australian soprano Nellie Melba, and she taught only women. She would not allow any of her students to sing an "ee" vowel on any note in the *passaggio* or above. She felt it was a detriment to the health of the female vocal apparatus and unaesthetic to boot.³⁰ Giovanni Lamperti taught that a woman must never vocalize on any vowel but "ah" in the *passaggio* and head register.³¹ The theory is that because of acoustical frequency levels in the female voice in the *passaggio* and above, the shape of the throat and the position of the soft palate are not conducive to comfortably producing the extremely horizontal vowel "ee." The female voice becomes very thin on an "ee" vowel in the upper register, losing all of the open-throated sound that gives beauty and color to the voice. In examining fourteen Bellini arias, I found four examples of "ee" vowels on notes in the *passaggio*, but none in the head register. Mozart and Verdi used the "ee" vowel for very specific dramatic and emotional effects on high notes.

In Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, Pamina is near death, on the verge of suicide. Mozart writes a high Bb pianissimo on the word *liebe* in the phrase "...der liebe gluck..." at which point Pamina is weak, despondent and has lost all hope. Many sopranos, in their attempt to avoid this "ee" vowel, will change the words to "... der ganzes gluck..." which changes the mood that Mozart specifically wanted to create, evoked only by a thin, helpless, frail female sound.

Verdi uses the "ee" vowel in two arias from *La Traviata*: "Sempre Libera" and in the final phrase of Violetta's closing aria "Addio del passato." In "Sempre Libera" Violetta sings "...follie..." (pronounce foe-lee-eh) on a high Ab and again in the same aria "...gioire..." (pronounced joe-ee-reh) on high G. Here, they are both indicative of hysterical outbursts, so Verdi uses the "ee" vowel for a

29 Caruso, *Art of Singing*, 1975: 62.

30 Mathilde Marchesi. *Bel Canto — A Theoretical and Practical Method* (New York: Dover), 1974: 17.

31 Ibid. p. 24.

more penetrating, intense sound, very appropriate at those moments in the opera. In “Addio del passato” the final word of the aria is “fini” (pronounced fee-nee). Violetta is on her deathbed. The final high pianissimo of the aria is sung on a high A, generating an unbelievably sympathetic feeling for the character. The sound is exactly as Verdi intended it: thin, weak and fragile in its delicate beauty. Verdi composed this at the beginning of the Verismo (“Realistic”) period in opera, when a desire for true-to-life vocal expression was just emerging.

Conclusion

This investigation has given me a much deeper connection with the liturgical texts and a clearer understanding of the unique bond between word and music. My research has convinced me that traditional *hazzanut* is a feasible and accessible artistic outlet for the female cantor. I feel certain that other female cantors will agree with me if they find the subject interesting enough for further experimentation and study. The freedom and courage to explore this unique musical form of religious expression will perhaps bring about the use of musical improvisation among women cantors, thus encouraging them to open new avenues for infusing synagogue prayer with a spirituality that is uniquely feminine.

Pamela Kordan Trimble received her graduate degree in vocal performance from the Eastman School of Music, and her cantorial ordination from Hebrew Union College. She has performed extensively for both the religious and secular communities, serving as a professional cantor for the past seventeen years and performing the operatic roles of Michaela in Bizet's Carmen, Rosalinda in Strauss' Die Fledermaus, Mimi in Puccini's La Boheme, Pamina in The Magic Flute, Rosina in Rossini's The Barber of Seville and Nedda in Leoncavallo's I Pagliacci. Cantor Trimble has also appeared as a concert soloist with the Naples (FL) Philharmonic and the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. This article is adapted from her 1991 Master's thesis at the School of Sacred Music.

Music of The First Jewish Woman Composer

by Victor Tunkel

At a recent concert in London, an item by Salamone Rossi was introduced as by “the first Jewish composer since King David.” By that criterion we may say that the first Jewish woman composer since Miriam and Deborah was Leonora Duarte (1610 – 1678).

She was the eldest of six musically talented children of Gaspar Duarte, a Portuguese marrano. Gaspar, himself a keyboard player, had done well in the diamond trade and his grand family house in Antwerp had become a centre of culture: of the arts, sciences and literature, and so known as the “Antwerp parnassus”; but above all, in its music making, said by contemporaries to excel even the Monteverdi household in Venice. All the siblings seem to have played or sung in public, said an English visitor, “a fine consort and harmony for lutes, viols, virginals and voices.” Leonora’s sister, Francesca — a superb singer — is described by a French visitor as *rossignol anversois* (“the nightingale from Antwerp”). Her brother Diego, jeweller to both Charles I and II of England, composed many settings of psalms and other poems, but none seem to have survived.

Fortunately, however, one composition of Leonora’s has survived, in a manuscript at Christ Church College, Oxford: her *Sinfonie*, seven pieces for a consort of five viols.¹ The paper used suggests a date of copying between 1630 and 1645. David Pinto describes four of the pieces as “free fantasies *à l’anglaise*”; two to be *cantus firmus* compositions and one, apparently based on Frescobaldi’s four-part *Ricercari* (featuring imitative themes, 1615), to which Leonora has added a fifth, treble, part and made other changes. Each piece is in a different Church mode, Dorian, Ionian, etc.

The English style of her pieces and their somewhat “old-fashioned” modal and polyphonic early-17th century character has led to speculation of an association with England, or at least with an English teacher in Antwerp. Perhaps this was John Bull, or another of the many refugees from the upheavals in England.

Sadly, none of the siblings seem to have married. In that small and dwindling community there may have been few prospects of finding partners. Some members of the family went and settled in Amsterdam, where they were able to throw off the pretense of Catholicism. But Leonora and her immediate

1 Leonora Duarte’s 7 *Sinfonie à 5* is available from Corda Music Publications, 183 Beech Road, St. Albans AL3 5AN, England.

family remained in Antwerp, where she and two of her sisters died in about 1678, probably as a result of the plague that year. When Diego died in 1691, the last flame of the Duarte talent was finally extinguished. A cousin, Manuel Levy Duarte, had to come from Amsterdam to wind up the family's affairs.

It is doubtful if the complete set of Leonora's *Sinfonie* has ever been performed; certainly it has not been recorded. But, unlike so many brief flowerings of Jewish music talent down the centuries of which we have not a trace, here we have all the information we need, scores and composer, to give her work life. It has been edited and published by Corda Music of St Albans, England, with a biographical note by Rudolf Rasch of the University of Utrecht, and a musical analysis by David Pinto. Further accounts of Leonora and her family may be found in "The Antwerp Duarte family as musical patrons" by Rasch in the colloquium, *Orlandus Lassus and His Time* (Peer, Belgium 1995), and the *Norton/Grove Dictionary of Women Composers* (1994).

* * * * *

At my request, the Journal's editor, Joseph Levine has arranged Leonora's seventh *Sinfonia* as a duet for two voices — to the text of *Hah, Biti* ("Alas, My Daughter!"), a Mother's lament on the death of her child — by Judah Halevi, who lived in Spain from 1075-1141. When I came across this poem in *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse*, an invaluable anthology compiled and annotated by T. Carmi (1981:339), its despairing tone struck me as particularly akin to the autumnal mood of Leonora's final *Sinfonia*. That realization provided the missing piece in a project that Levine and I had been discussing for some time: setting one of Duarte's instrumental pieces to words. The two voices — male or female, or a combination of both — carry the essence of Leonora's flowing contrapuntal lines, often semi-canonically, while the piano accompaniment embodies elements of the other three viol parts. The pitch has been lowered a full tone to accommodate the comfort zone of most voices.

*Victor Tunkel, a London barrister and law lecturer, has had a lifetime involvement in Jewish music as an amateur chorister, cantor, cantillator, collector and educator. His elegant taste is evidenced by his pairing of the Halevi poem with the Duarte Sonatina. His book, **The Music of the Hebrew Bible: The Western Ashkenazic Tradition**, was reviewed in the 2006 Journal.*

Example 1. Duet arranged by Joseph Levine from Leonora Duarte's *Sinfonia 7 for 5 Viols*, to Judah Halevi's *Hah, Biti* ("A Mother's Lament"), which follows on the next four pages.

A Mother's Lament

Words: Judah Halevi (1075 — 1141)
 Music: Leonora Duarte (1610 — 1678)

Arranged: Joseph A. Levine
 after Duarte's
Sinfonia no. 7 for 5 viols.

הה, בתי A MOTHER'S LAMENT

הה, בתי, השכחת מִשְׁכַּנִּי ?
 כי לשאול נסעו נושאי ארוני,
 ואין חלקי ממך רק זכרוני.
 ואחונן את עפרות ציוני
 : עת אסור לשאל שלומך — ואיני :
 כי הנמות נפריד ביני וביניך.

Alas, my daughter, have you forgotten
 your home? The coffin bearers have taken
 you to the grave, and I have nothing left of
 you but your memory. When I come to
 greet you, and do not find you, I take pity
 on the dust of your tomb; for death has
 parted us.

Andante (♩=100)

Piano

7

Voice 1
 Hah! bi - ti, ha - sha-kha - hat mish - ka - neikh? Ki

Voice 2
 Hah! bi - ti, ha-sha - kha - hat mish -

Piano

12

lish - ol nas - u, nos' - ei a - ro - neikh,
 - ka - neikh?ki lish - ol nas - u a - ro - neikh, a -

17

a - ro - neikh? _____ Ve - ein _____ hel - ki _____ mi -
 - ro - neikh, a - ro - neikh? ve - ein ve - ein _____ hel - ki, hel - ki. mi -

22

- meikh, _____ rak zikh-ro - neikh, va - a - ho - nein _____ et
 meikh, rak _____ zikh - ro - neikh, va - a - ho - nein, et _____ af - rot _____

27

af - rot tsi - yu - neikh _____ eit a - sur lish ol _____ shlo -
 _____ tsi - yu - neikh _____ eit _____ a - sur lish ol _____ shlo -

32

- meikh. ————— Ki ha - ma - vet, — ki, —————

- meikh. Ki ha - ma - vet, ki ————— ha -

38

ki ha - ma - vet, ki ————— yaf -

ma - vet, ki ha - ma - vet yaf - rid, —

43

rid, ————— yaf - rid, yaf - rid ————— bei - ni u -

yaf - rid, ————— yaf - rid, ————— yaf - rid ————— bei - ni

sf *rit.*

**D.C. al Segno,
then to coda**

49

vei - neikh; v' - ei-neikh, ve - ei - neikh,
u - vei - neikh; v - ei - - - neikh,

**D.C. al Segno,
then to coda**

54

v' - ei - - - - - neikh, ei - - - - -
v' - ei - - - - - neikh, - - - - - ei - - - - -

59

- - - - - neikh, v' - ei - neikh, v' - ei - - - - - neikh.
- - - - - neikh, ve - ei - - - - - neikh, v' - ei - - - - - neikh.

rit. e dim

Ha-Derekh Arukah: The Songs of Naomi Shemer

by Sam Weiss

Since the legendary songwriter's death, I renewed my acquaintance with the Naomi Shemer songs that have traversed the years and the oceans to become international hits. I also made my acquaintance with a musical treasure trove that was new to me — numerous songs long-celebrated in Israel, but not well-known abroad. These discoveries and rediscoveries have been rewarding and reassuring. The feeling of reassurance comes from the realization that Shemer's expanse of spirit and humanity has had a broad audience in a nation with such a harsh history and (probably) a harsh future. For if there is comfort in witnessing Israelis survive and persevere, there is even greater solace in knowing that the best parts of their humanity can and will endure as well.

For close to five decades the appeal of Naomi Shemer's works has stayed strong due to the craft and clarity of her lyrics and to the charm of her melodies. Her audience has been much wider than most singers' because of her long career as a songwriter for musicals, recordings, films and television programs. A great variety of artists and performing groups have disseminated her sensitivity and understanding, enabling her sentiments to pervade Israeli society even more readily than those of a fine novelist or poet laureate whose works — like Shemer's — are part of the national school curriculum. The immediacy of her words and music has even forged a bond between the sensibilities of Israeli citizens and of Diaspora Jews — and that is doubly reassuring.

As for the rewards that I have found in her works, that is the subject of the rest of this article. In listening to over a hundred compositions and perusing many more, I was fully prepared to characterize the "typical" Naomi Shemer song. How delightful is the impossibility of such an assignment! Each melody rises anew, bringing a fresh imaginative poem to life. At the same time, one is touched by a unifying spirit that seems to hover over her entire oeuvre. It is a spirit of gentle, pensive optimism, a quasi-religious optimism that takes the long view, embracing the bitter along with the sweet (*Al Kol Eileh*) and singing Halleluyah on a never-ending holiday that celebrates everything from an infant's first steps to a baker's fresh bread (*Yeish Li Hag*). It is a feeling of hope that the composer has transposed to her songs from the zemirot sung by her father (*Shiro Shel Aba*) and from her mother's prayerful pose in the portrait she keeps on her piano (*Dyokan Imi*).

Not too often, however, does Shemer offer us optimism – or any other mood or feeling – in its simple unalloyed form. There is frequently a shade of doubt, a tinge of sadness, or some other contrasting emotion vying for our heart's attention. For example, with a title and a refrain like “You Won't Beat Me Down” (*Lo T'Natz'hu Oti*) we might expect a song of utter triumph. Instead, we hear these final verses ¹

In my window are spring and autumn,
A rainy day and a scorching day,
Light and darkness, soloist and choir.
It's all mixed up and confused:
Songs of Lamentation, songs of Hallel;
And sometimes it's one giant mess.
But suddenly it all gets clear
And I tell myself:
No, oh no, you won't beat me down!
I don't get beaten down so fast!

בחלוני אביב וסתיו
ויום גשום, ויום שרב
ואור וחושך, ויחיד ומקהלה
זה מתערבב, זה מתערבב,
שירי קינה, שירי הלל
ולפעמים זו המלה אחת גדולה
אבל פתאום זה מתבהר
ולעצמי אני אומר
לא לא לא תנצחו אותי
לא מנצחים אותי כל-בך מדר

When there is little incentive to sing, she admits as much but continues to sing nonetheless, as in *Hevlei Mashi'ah*:

Sometimes I absorb blow after blow
And when it gets bad and bitter, that's precisely
When I start to sing:
“Pre-Messianic tribulations –
He must be coming any minute!”

לפעמים אני סופג מכה אחר מכה
ובשרע לי וכשמור לי, אז אני דווקא
שר לי כך
חבלי-משיח
הנה זה בא היום

Sometimes all that one can do when bad news predominates is to turn lemon into lemonade, as in the wry song *Ein Li Rega Dal* (Never A Dull Moment).

By the end of the day I was on Cloud Nine –
Where else is life this interesting?
So I said goodnight and, God willing,
Maybe tomorrow I'll have a boring day.

בסוף היום הייתי ממש בעננים
איפה ישנם חיים כל כך מעניינים
אמרתי לילה טוב, ובעזרת השם
אולי מחר יהיה לי יום משעמם

Optimism is the reigning spirit even for the dejected characters in Shemer's songs, and they are rarely left in total despondence. The beautiful lament *Al*

¹ All translations from the Hebrew are by the author.

Tish'alu Oti (Don't Ask Me) is a catalogue of woes, a tale of songs silenced by a guitar that has been shattered against the rocks. But in the final verse our erstwhile singer concludes: "Only silence flows, like a river; / From the stones on the shore an echo calls. / Perhaps tomorrow I will sing a new song." Even the guitar, speaking for itself, says quite plainly in *Ani Gitarah*:

I am a guitar;	אני גיטרה
The wind plays me with the change of seasons.	הרוח מנגן עלי בחלופי-עונות
I am a guitar;	אני גיטרה
Somebody strums me with changing tunes.	מישהו פורט עלי בחלופי המנגינות
...	...
Never in my life have I given up: Whatever didn't happen in May Will surely happen, God willing, In June or July.	לא התיאשתי מימי כי מה שלא קרה במאי יקרה בעזרת השם ודאי ביוני יולי

Optimism is one thing, but unbridled jubilation is quite another – and the latter is not at all common in Shemer's works. It is interesting to observe how Israel's history and the passing of time temper the artist herself. In 1963 she pens the exuberantly confident *Mahar* (Tomorrow), with its golden apples, pealing bells, and the proverbial lion lying with the lamb. We only partly believe her when she adds *kol zeh eino mashal v'lo halom* ("all of this is not a fable or a dream"). By 1976, with the passing of many a *mohrotayim* of travail, she offers a less sanguine vision of what we might expect from our tomorrows, in *Ha-Hagigah Nigmeret* (The Party's Over) she writes:

To rise up tomorrow morning With a new song in your heart; To sing it loud, right through the pain;	לקום מחר בבוקר עם שיר חדש בלב לשיר אותו בכוח, לשיר אותו בכאב
To hear flutes in the free-blowing wind, And to start all over again.	לשמוע חלילים ברוח החופשית ולהתחיל מבראשית

Finally, by 1994 she adopts a more balanced view of the future with this refrain of *Ha-Kol Patu'ah* –

It's all wide open, it's not too late;
 The mood will improve tomorrow.
 It's possible, It can happen,
 As long as we are here, singing.

הכל פתוח, עוד לא מאוחר
 מצב הרוח ישתפר מחר
 זה יתכן, זה אפשרי
 כל עוד אנחנו כאן שרים

More characteristically, such an ebb and flow of emotions will occur within a single song, as in *La-Shir Zeh K'mo Lihyot Yardein* (To Sing Is Like Being The Jordan). The striking title conjures up the positive feelings of flowing energy that might be felt by a singer, and that is exactly what we read in the first verse. But by the third and final verse we understand the poet's true intention, as she follows the metaphor to its grim logical conclusion:

Your destiny is to expire like the Jordan,
 To be gathered slowly into the Dead Sea,
 In the lowest point on Earth.
 But from the snowy mountaintops,
 In a huge joyful noise,
 Your songs bubble down after you.
 To sing is indeed like being the Jordan.

סופך לגווע כמו ירדן
 להאסף לאט אל ים המוות
 במקום הנמוך ביותר בעולם
 אבל מראש הרי השלג
 בהמולה גדולה צוחלת
 אחרוך שיריך מפכים להם
 הלא לשיר זה כמו להיות ירדן

Shemer's penchant for emotional complexity is epitomized in *Ein Davar*, whose refrain is the paradoxical statement by Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk, "There is nothing more complete than a broken heart, and no louder scream than silence." Shemer mines the poetic potential in this idea, and then sets her lyrics of bittersweet melancholy to a melody that moves ambivalently between major and minor cadences (**Example 1**).

The musical score consists of three staves of music in a 4/4 time signature. The first staff has a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature. The second and third staves continue the melody. Chord symbols are placed above the notes: E7, Am, E7, E7, G7, C, C, C, F, E7, Am, G, C. The lyrics are written below the notes.

leil a- viv ma- lei ya- rei- ah od m'- at v'- yi- ga- meir i - ma -
 hot om- rot la- ye- led hi- za- heir v'- hi- sha- meir i- ma-
 hot not- not la- ye- led mi- div- shan va- ha- la- van u- mei-

Dm Am Am E7 Am
a- ha- rei ha- de- let m'- tza- peh lo g'di la- van

Example 1. *A moonlit evening in spring; before long, it will end.*

Mothers warn the child — “Be careful, watch yourself!”

Mothers give the child their honey and their milk; and on the other side of the door a white baby-goat awaits him...

She reserves her final musical judgment on this enigma for the refrain, whose upbeat melody transforms *Der Kotzker’s* conundrum into a statement of purpose (**Example 2**):

G C G C A7 Dm A Dm
ein da- var ein da- var sha- leim yo- teir mi- leiv sha- vur v'- zo-
1. Dm G7 C E7 2. Dm G7 C
eik yo- teir min ha- d'ma- mah ein da- eik yo- teir min had- ma- mah

Example 2. *There is nothing more complete than a broken heart, and no louder scream than silence.*

Shemer wrote many poems that were never set to music; she set to music poems of other writers; and she translated a number of foreign songs into Hebrew – but it would be very wrong to think of her simply as a poet who was also a composer: She was a true songwriter, creating wonderful lyrics, and tunes that wrap smoothly around the words. As we saw in *Ein Davar*, a songwriter’s message is oftentimes not completely contained in the lyrics. This is certainly true of many of her songs, in which the whole is frequently different from – and often greater than – the sum of its two parts. To take a well-known song as an example: If you recite slowly the lyrics of *Od Lo Ahavti Dai* (“Still Haven’t Loved Enough”) without hearing the familiar snappy melody in your ears, you will find that this unrelenting series of short negative sentences could just as well have turned into a rather doleful ballad. The joyful melody is the “Rashi” that yields the true interpretation of the songwriter’s words. I tried this exercise of words vs. words-and-music on a number of unfamiliar

Shemer songs that I learned from the printed page, and have acquired a new admiration for her musical magic.

* * * * *

Naomi Shemer's first hit song, *Zamar Nodeid* (The Wandering Minstrel), was written in 1958, a time of transition in Israeli popular music. People were still singing the old folksongs as well as newer songs about the desert blooming into nationhood; and they still sang about the wartime victories and losses of 1948 and 1956. At the same time, theatrical entertainments were producing songs about the ups and downs of life in the new state, and descriptive lyrics about various and sundry other situations. In this milieu, Shemer's song in the first person singular was quite novel. It expressed a cheerful universal feeling without a hint of the Israeli context in which it was composed:

The road is long and vast,
The road is long and quite magnificent.
Everyone walks along the road
to the end,
Everyone walks along the road
to the bitter end.

הדרך ארוכה היא ורבה, רבה
הדרך ארוכה היא ורבת־הדר
כולם הולכים בדרך עד סופה, סופה
כולם הולכים בדרך עד סופה המר

But I, I march by myself –
Hallelu... Halleluyah... Hallelu...
And I, I sing the songs of a
wandering minstrel:
Hallelu... Halleluyah... Hallelu...

אבל אני, אבל אני לבר, לבר צועד
הללו – הללויה – הללו
ושר אני, ושר אני שירי זמר נודד
הללו – הללויה – הללו

Shemer's compositions were a breath of fresh air melodically as well. Even her earliest tunes have a "pop music" sensibility and generally do not sound like the waltzes, tangos and other European styles that served as popular music models in the late 1950s. Nor do they sound like the classic Israeli folksongs – with their sequential melodies in minor keys and their syncopated Hora rhythms – or their musical offshoots favored in those years by singers like Shoshana Damari and Yaffa Yarkoni. Here, for instance are sections from two Naomi Shemer songs written in 1958, an atmospheric one about Tel-Aviv, "The White Town" (*Ha'ir Ha-L'vanah*) (**Example 3**), and one about coy and undecided *No'a* (**Example 4**). Both are interesting melodies that draw their interest from – and the listener's attention to – equally engaging lyrics.

mi - ke - tzef gal va - a - na - nah - ba - ni - ti ir li l' - va -

nah k'mo - tam kotz - fah k'mo - tam shot - fah k'mo - tam ya - fah.

Example 3. *Out of foam, wave and cloud I built myself a white city – just as frothy, flowing and beautiful.*

♩ = 75 Freely

no - a nol - dah ba - sa - deh bein de - she l' - e - ven no - a hai - tah k' - mo ei - gel shel

tal har - tzit hi kat - fah ba - sa - deh u - min ha - ko - te - ret tal - shah al - al al -

A Tempo

al kein o lo kein o lo e - lef shi - rim va -

shir no - a kein o lo al - a - lai kein o lo o u - lai

Example 4. *Noa was born in a field between grass and stone; she was like a drop of dew. She picked a daisy in the field and plucked one petal at a time: Yes or no, yes or no — a thousand and one songs, Noa — Yes or no, oh my petals — Yes or no, or maybe.*

There are occasional exceptions to Shemer's forward-looking compositional approach. For *Kibui Orot* (Lights Out), a 1958 song about a military encampment in the desert at nightfall, she writes a melody reminiscent of the old "camel caravan" songs (Example 5).

Cm B^b E^b B^{b6} Cm B^b E^b B^{b6} Cm F Fm
 La - yil ba el ha - mid - bar mi - m' - du - rot a - shan o - leh u - tz' -
 Cm B^b Cm F Fm Cm Gm Cm
 lil tu - pim na - dam na - dam al a - ra - vot ni - tzat ya - rei - ah u - fa - nav ka - dam

Example 5. *Night has come to the desert; smoke rises from the campfires and the sound of drums is fading.
The red-faced moon is budding over the prairies.*

When setting the works of other poets, Shemer will sometimes favor the older melodic structures, as in Raḥel's poem *Zemer* (**Example 6**).

Am Em F C Dm E E⁷
 bo - ker va - e - rev l' - kha v' - a - le - kha l' - kha v' - a - le - kha sha - ru shi - rai
 Am Am Em F C Dm E⁷ Am
 sa - ar va - do - mi tza - hal u - ve - khi pe - tza va - tzo - ri na - ḥat ud - vai

Example 6. *Morning and evening to you and about you my poems sang.
Storm and calm, joy and tears; hurting and healing, pleasure and pain.*

Shaul Tchernichovsky's *Hoi Artzi Molad'ti* (O, My Homeland), which looks back to the days of yore, is fitted with a suitably old-fashioned tonality (**Example 7**).

Am Dm G⁷ C F G C
 min - za - rim gal ma - tzei - vah ki - pot tit al ba - yit
 A⁷ Dm G⁷ C Dm Am E⁷
 mo - sha - vah lo no - sha - vah za - yit ei - tzel za - yit

Example 7. *Monasteries, a mound, a gravestone; clay dome on a house,
a settlement not settled; olive trees in a row.*

However, the same poet's timeless *Omrim Yeshmah Eretz* (They Tell Of A Land) is given an entirely different musical treatment, with a particularly majestic second strain (**Example 8**).

E - retz bah yit - ka - yem a - sher kol ish ki - vah

nikh - nas kol ha - nikh - nas, pa - ga bo A - ki - va.

Example 8. *A land where every man's hope will come to pass. Enter all who will.
One man was met by Rabbi Akiva.*

As to the other side of the songwriter's craft, Shemer's words are truly meant to be sung. They generally add up to only a few verses, with rhyming lines that scan well metrically. In addition, the poems often have a narrative, conversational, or other dynamic quality that propels them into our consciousness and onto our lips. Her biblical allegory *Kad Ha-Kemah* is a wonderful example in this regard. It begins in the first person; it proceeds to tell a story in the third person; it cites the words of God to Elijah as its refrain; the last line of every verse leads directly into this quote (each time with a different verb); and at the end, the biblical episode is brought to bear on contemporary Israeli concerns. Remarkably, this feat is accomplished in only four brief verses:

I'm reading in the Book of Kings,
In Chapter Seventeen,
I'm reading about a man of God
Who said:

אני קורא בספר מלכים
בפרק השבעה-עשר
אני קורא על איש האלוהים
אשר אמר

The flour-jar shall not be depleted,
And the oil-jug shall not run dry,
Before the rain will come
Upon the face of the earth.

כד הקמה לא תיכלה
וצפתת השמן לא תחסר
עד אשר יבוא מטר
על פני האדמה

And when the rivers run dry,
And the rain is late in coming,
That man drew these words
From his heart:

וכאשר יבשו הנהלים
והמטר בושש לבוא
האיש ההוא הצב את המילים
מלבבו

The flour-jar...

כד הקמה...

Perhaps that man understood hardship,
 Perhaps he tasted of the bitter herb,
 Perhaps when his soul engulfed him
 He sang once more:
 The flour-jar...

אולי האיש ההוא ידע מחסור
 אולי מעם משורש מר
 אולי בהתעמף עליו נפשו
 הוא שב ושר
 כד הקמתה...

And in these difficult days,
 Days of no dew and no rain,
 I always return to that man
 And I remember –
 The flour-jar...

ובימים האלה הקשים
 ימי אל טל ואל מטר
 תמיד אני הוזר לאיש ההוא
 ואני נזכר
 כד הקמתה...

Shemer's lyrics make use of other structural elements as singing "hooks." Often the opening verse is echoed, reformulated, or restated in the final verse. Another technique she uses is the "dual refrain" – that is, a recurring phrase that weaves through the verses and also forms part of the refrain proper. The words *lu y'-hi* function this way in the famous song by that title. Every third line of the song is *kol she-n'vakeish lu y'-hi*, including the refrain, which is

If only, if only, oh, if only...
 All that we hope for... If only!

לו יהי, לו יהי, אנא לו יהי
 כל שנבקש לו יהי

A similar example is *Al Kol Eileh* (For All Of These), a song that repeats a number of words and phrases throughout, albeit in an asymmetrical pattern. Such devices can turn a great song into a hit – witness the continued popularity of both *Lu Y'-hi* and *Al Kol Eileh*.

* * * * *

Zamar Nodeid not only paved the way for greater creativity in Israeli popular lyrics, but also furnished its composer with a metaphor that would be a leitmotiv in her works to come: "*ha-derekh arukah*" – "the long road." It not only finds full expression as the theme of many songs, it also occurs as words and phrases within a large number of other songs. These combine to make "the long road" a literary trope that permeates the complete cycle of Naomi Shemer's songs.

Songs that embody this theme explicitly include the many "road songs" like *Ha-Tiyul Ha-Gadol* (The Long Hike) and *Hayalim Yats'u La-Derekh* (Soldiers Enroute) as well as songs of flying through the air – *Al Kanfei Ha-Kesef* (On Silvery Wings), *Banayikh Mei-Rahok* (Your Sons From Afar). There are also songs of journeying towards the beloved – *El Borot Ha-Mayim* (To The Water Wells), of awaiting the beloved's return – *Ha-Hayal Sheli Hazar* (My Soldier Is Back) and of leaving and returning – *Anahnu Mei-Oto Ha-K'far* (We're From

The Same Village). The starting points or destinations of the journeys are not always made clear, as in Shemer's parable *Ha'-Orei'ah* (The Guest) (Example 12), nor are the journeys easily accomplished, as in this song:

That's a sign we have not yet arrived,	סימן שעוד לא הגענו
And the horizon is still far away;	והאופק עוד רחוק
And your heart is still open	וליבך עודו פתוח
To the four corners of the wind.	אל ארבעת הרוחות
And we must continue walking,	וצריך להמשיך ללכת
And we must continue marching,	וצריך להמשיך לצעוד
And the road continues to be long.	והדרך עוד מושכת ארוכה

It is noteworthy that the only translation from Yiddish that Shemer published was her version of Itzik Manger's song *Oyfn Veg Shteyt A Boym* (Near The Road There Is A Tree). Perhaps she was drawn to this piece while setting to music Natan Alterman's poem *Al Eim Ha-Derekh* (At The Crossroads), which shares with Manger's work a common source in the similarly titled *Oyfn Veg Shteyt A Boym*, a short Yiddish folksong about traveling to Zion. But the symbol of the road can hardly be coincidental, and must certainly have figured in her choice.

The marching, traveling, or journeying metaphor also appears in a wide variety of songs that are not explicitly based on the *derekh arukah* theme, yet contain this idea in a supporting role. Following are but a few examples: *Al Kol Eileh* has its "man returning home from a great distance," while in *Lu Y'-hi* it is "the end of summer, the end of the road, Allow them to return back here." At the beginning of *Od Lo Ahavti Dai*, these opening words seem to encapsulate the point of all the variegated imagery in the rest of the song: "I have not yet determined where the road will lead me, or where I'm headed."

Mahar, that rousing anthem to optimism, derives its vigor not from the "thousand pealing bells" but from its opening "fantastic voyage" –

Tomorrow, maybe we will sail in boats	מחר אולי נפליגה בספינות
From the coast of Eilat to the Ivory Coast;	מחוף אילת עד חוף שנהב
And load the old war ships	ועל המשהתות הישנות
With oranges.	יטעינו תפוחי-זהב

In *Anashim Tovim*, one of the songs that she recorded, Shemer sings about how we are constantly benefiting from so many "Good People" all around us. And guess where these good souls are to be found...

There are good people along the road,
 Real beautiful people.
 Good people know the way,
 And they're the ones to walk with.

אנשים טובים באמצע הדרך
 אנשים טובים מאוד
 אנשים טובים יודעים את הדרך
 ואיתם אפשר לצעוד

In *Dyokan Imi* we are made to see the portrait of Shemer's mother, and how it inspires the poet's journey through life:

Like towards an adventure,
 Like towards some distant road
 That beckons and waits;
 There are still some surprises left in her lap.
 My mother's face is raised heavenwards,
 Full of possibilities, full of hope,
 Towards that infinite future
 that has not yet arrived.

אבל כמו אל הרפתקה
 אל איזו דרך רחוקה
 שמפתה ומחכה
 והפתעות יש בחיקה, עדיין
 דיוקן אמי מונף אל השמיים
 מלא אפשריות, מלא תקווה
 אל העתיד האינסופי שטרם בא

The great span and indeterminate nature of Naomi Shemer's *derekh arukah* can easily turn it into a metaphor for the chronicles of *Medinat Yisrael* – which may help explain the compelling and epic quality of some of her imagery. This connection was movingly expressed in 1995, when Shemer translated and set to music Walt Whitman's poem "O Captain, My Captain" (written upon the assassination of Abraham Lincoln) in homage to the slain Yitzhak Rabin. Upon hearing *Ho Rav Hoveil* one feels that the composer is writing as a fellow voyager on Israel's Ship of State, and the effect is powerful.

If there is one song that sums up all of the literal and figurative voyages and journeys symbolized in Shemer's work, it would have to be *Simanei Ha-Derekh* (Signs Along The Road) –

If I've lost the way
 Familiar to me all these years,
 Here and there on the side of the road
 There still are some signposts.
 Here's one arrow,
 Drawn in white chalk:
 Follow the wind –
 Two-and-a-quarter steps from here.

אם שכחתי את הדרך
 המוכרת משנים
 פה ושם בצד הדרך
 נשארו לי סימנים
 חץ אחד הנה שלוח
 מצויר בניר לבן:
 לך אחר הרוח
 שתי פסיעות ורבע מכאן

Somewhere on that road there is singing,
Somewhere a bell is ringing;
From anywhere, go back home
When the time is right.

...
I am not alone on that road
That leads back to my home;
There's a friend or two
Who are going home with me.
And in the setting sun,
From the sound of the bells,
They can figure out
All the signs for me.
Somewhere on that road...

אי משם שר לו בדרך
אי משם שר פעמון
אי משם שובה הביתה
בזמן הנכון
...

לא לבד אני בדרך
ההולכת אל ביתי
יש חבר אחד או שניים
שהולכים הביתה איתי
ובשמש השוקעת
בדנרון פעמונים
הם ידעו לפענח
לי את כל הסימנים
אי משם...

* * * * *

Naomi Shemer's output was quite wide-ranging; it includes children songs, novelty songs, songs about puppy love and romantic love – along with the many subjects we have already discussed. Yet despite the wide range and approachable quality of her lyrics – and despite the universality presaged in *Zamar Nodeid* – she is not a “universal” poet or composer. She is a palpably Israeli songwriter, closely tied to Israel's history and daily life, incorporating Israeli names, places, objects and themes throughout her work, and writing melodies that helped define the very genre of Israeli music.

She was in touch with enduring Jewish themes no less than with contemporary national concerns, writing Jewish holiday songs for children (*Pesah Kan, Neir Rishon Shel Hanukkah*), sardonic commentaries and takeoffs on Jewish holiday songs (*G'di Ehad, Mi Yadlik*) as well as many songs that quote extensively from *Tanakh*. Some of the latter have clearly delineated biblical themes, such as *Kad Ha-Kemah*, cited above. Often such a piece will have an ironic or even confrontational stance. *Al Naharot Bavel* is a biting critique of Israel's *Yordim* who prefer to sing about Israel while living by the Rivers of Babylon. Her concluding lines are trenchant indeed:

Where is Tzvikaḥ, Where is Hayyim,
 Where are all the guys?
 They're living By the Rivers of Babylon
 And all together, this what they sing:
 "There we sat and wept
 And sang rounds,
 As we remembered, remembered Zion."

...

They sure are remembering Zion.
 Zion remembers them as well,
 With the same melody.
 She waited Two Thousand Years;
 She is still waiting.

איפה צביקה, איפה חיים
 איפה כל הבחורים?
 על נהרות בבל יושבים הם
 וביחד כך שרים –
 "שם ישבנו גם בכינו
 גם זמרנו בקנון
 בזכרנו בזכרנו את ציון"

...

את ציון זוכרים, זוכרים
 גם ציון אותם זוכרת
 באותה המנגינה
 היא המתינה שנות אלפיים
 היא עדיין ממתינה

Akeidat Yitzhak begins with a paraphrase of B'reishit 22:2-3, describing the binding of Isaac, and ends with a challenging tone reminiscent of Levi-Yitzhak of Berdichev's peremptory songs addressed to the Almighty:

Even if we lived seven-fold to old age,
 We will not forget that the knife was raised.
 We will not forget Your son,
 Your only one,
 Whom we loved –
 We will not forget Yitzhak.

גם אם שבע נחיה ונזקין
 לא נשכח כי הונף הסכין
 לא נשכח את בינך
 את יחידך
 אשר אהבנו
 לא נשכח את יצחק

But regardless of its theme, many a Naomi Shemer song is laced through with biblical vocabulary and metaphor. For example, within the brooding song *Mah Sh'lomeikh Ahot* (What's New, Sister?) we find an arresting poetic homily on the verse from Psalm 126, *Ha-zor'im b'-dim'ah b'-rinah yiktisoru* ("May those who sowed in tears reap in joy") –

There's one thing I already
 know by heart:
 Whatever is not born through tears
 Is not worth much.
 Whatever is not born through tears
 Will not be brought in through song,
 And will not bring healing.

יש דבר אחד שכבר
 ידוע לי על-פה
 מה שלא נולד בדמע
 לא שווה הרבה
 מה שלא נולד בדמע
 הוא לא ייקצר בזמר
 ולא יביא מרפא

In eight lines from *Al Kanfei Ha-Kesef*, a song about the I.D.F. Air Force pilots, we find no fewer than four biblical allusions:

<p>²The sea has fled and turned backward, And the river towards dry land. My brother flies, his face toward the light, ³And his banner over me is love.</p>	<p>נִם הַיָּם וַיִּסּוּב אַחֲרָיו וְהַנְּהַר – הָרַבָּה טָס אֶחָיו וּפְנֵיו לְאוֹר וּדְגָלוֹ עָלַי אֶתְחַבֵּה</p>
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<p>⁴The ladder's legs are on the ground, But its head is in the skies of war; My brother flies toward the sun, ⁵As the sparks fly upward.</p>	<p>הַסּוּלָם רַגְלָיו בְּאֲדָמָה אֲךָ רֵאשׁוֹ בְּשָׁמַי הַמַּלְחָמָה טָס אֶחָיו אֶל מוֹל הַחַמָּה כְּבַנְיֵי-רֶשֶׁף יִגְבִּיהוּ עוֹף</p>
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Moving beyond the Bible, we have a song like *Arba'ah Ahim*, which deconstructs à la Itzik Manger the Passover narrative of the Four Sons. *Shivhei Ma'oz* takes similar liberties with the refrain of the Hanukkah hymn *Ma'oz Tzur*. The words of the iconic *Yerushalayim Shel Zahav* may not appear to have any specifically Jewish antecedents, until we realize that a “Jerusalem of Gold” was an ancient Jewish ornamental headdress that is mentioned in the Talmud (*N'darim* 50a) and other early sources.

Of course, it is extremely hard to tease apart the “Jewish” from the “Israeli” in an artist like Shemer, for whom the Bible and ancillary texts need not be religiously significant, but simply part of her nation’s literary patrimony. Nevertheless, perhaps we may take her words at face value when she brings the words of Ezekiel (16: 6) to bear on those who have sacrificed life and limb in Israel’s tragedies, writing in one of her last songs –

<p>The ancient words Give me strength; In the ancient sounds I will find healing. They help me live, They help me grow, To create a better world –</p>	<p>הַמִּילִים הָעַתִּיקוֹת נֹתְנוֹת בִּי כֹחַ בְּקוֹלוֹת הָעַתִּיקִים אֶמְצָא מְרַפָּא הֵם עוֹזְרִים לִי לְחַיּוֹת הֵם עוֹזְרִים לִי לְצִמּוֹחַ לְבְרוּא עוֹלָם יוֹתֵר יִפְהַ</p>
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2 T'hillim 114: 2

3 Shir HaShirim 2: 4

4 B'-Reishit 28: 12

5 Iyov 5: 7

*I passed by you and saw you
Lying in your blood,
And I said: "In your blood, live!"
Live! Live! In your blood you shall live!
And I said: "In your blood, live!"*

ואעבור עלייך ואראך
מתבוססת בדמיך
ואומר לך בדמיך היי
חיי, חיי, בדמיך היי
ואומר לך בדמיך היי

And suddenly above my head
A rainbow opens up.
A multi-colored fan spreads out,
Promising life,
Promising hope,
And peace and security and kindness.

ופתאום מעל ראשי
נפתחת קשת
מניפה צבעונית נפרשת
מבשרת חיים
מבשרת תקווה
ושלום ושלווה וחסד

The question of Naomi Shemer as a Jewish melodist is of interest to *hazzanim* no less than the question of Shemer as a Jewish poet. The examples that one can adduce are not many, but are significant nonetheless. The biblical song *Akeidat Yitzhak* that we discussed above is set to a melody that echoes various cantillation and prayer modes. For the stage production of Mendele Moykher-Sforim's *The Travels of Benjamin the Third*, Shemer wrote *Shirat Ha'-Asavim* (Song Of The Grasses), based on the words of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav (**Example 9**). Her *T'hillim* mode melody is pure *T'fillah*; and Shemer's own recording of the song has all the hallmarks of an affecting *Baalat T'fillah*.

Example 9. *Be aware that every single shepherd has his own individual song,
Be aware that every blade of grass has its own individual melody,
And from the song of the grasses comes the shepherd's melody.*

There are several songs in which the composer highlights the narrative quality and textual rhythms of a passage by means of a recitative-like melody. Such passages cannot avoid associations with Daven'n (**Example 10**).

♩=56

Gm⁶ Gm⁶

b' hei- ah- zut ha - na - hal b'- si- nai ha - mon d'va -

Gm⁶ Gm⁶ C

rim ya- fim ra- u ei - nai k'mo l'- ma - shal

Example 10. *When the Nahal captured Sinai, so many beautiful things did my eye see! For instance...*

Sometimes the “*T’fillah* effect” is a subtle one, but it is always a valid poetic gesture, as in *Mah Sh’lomeikh Ahot*, a rather dark song that lets in a fleeting moment of light by way of its refrain “You have me; I have you; we have each other.” The music seems to halt for this moment of respite, and the words are chanted rather than sung (**Example 11**).

♩=66

Cm/G Fm⁹/G F[#]dim G A^b6 G⁷ Cm

lakh yeish o - ti li yeish o - takh la - nu yeish o - ta - nu

Example 11. *You have me; I have you; we have each other.*

Similarly, there is a didactic quality to Shemer’s parable *Ha-Orei’ah* (The Guest) that is reinforced by its urgent yet flowing chant (**Example 12**).

♩=152

Cm Cm B^b A^bmaj⁷ G⁷

im ba- sha- ar yeish o- rei- ah she na- hat mei- ei - ver yam

Cm Fm⁹ G⁷

mah na- tzi- a la- o- rei- ah b'- vo- o mi- sham

Example 12. *If at the gate stands a guest who landed from overseas —
What shall we serve that guest when he arrives from there?*

* * * * *

In trying to assess the “Jewish” nature of Naomi Shemer’s metaphorical songs, I am essentially searching for a metaphor of my own – something on which to pin the faint aura of sanctity that suffuses so many of her finest

songs. Be it a secular sanctity or a religious one, it is one worth treasuring. This kol d'mamah dakah sings most persuasively to me in *B'khol Shanah Ba-Stav Giora* (Every Year In Autumn, Giora), a song that is not typical of her works, but which best captures the supernal aspect of Shemer's poetry and music. Her compositional skills are quite evident in this elegy in blank verse to a young victim of the Yom Kippur War, Giora Shoham. The melody almost takes on the character of an art song, waxing and waning like an aching heart, sounding unmistakably like a tender prayer – not so much in her invocation of Psalm 121, as in the plaintive repetition of the words *b'-khol shanah ba-stav* (Example 13).

B⁷ E Dm⁶ C^{#m7}
 b'- khol- sha- nah b' -khol sha -nah bas -tav gi- o - ra e -

Dm A⁷ F Gm⁶ Dm Am⁷ B⁷ B E
 sa ei- nai el he- ha -rim mei- a - yin ya-vo ez - ri b'- khol-sha- nah b' -

F Em Dm G⁷ C Am
 khol sha- nah bas- tav b' - khol sha- nah bas- tav b' -

F Em Dm G⁷ C
 khol sha- nah bas - tav b'- khol sha- nah bas - tav

Example 13. *[Every year in autumn, Giora, the wild wind in my garden nips off the very best roses.]*

Every year: Every year in autumn, Giora, I will lift up my eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help.

Every year in autumn.

The song continues in a passage laden with religious feeling, adding the names of comrades in the *daven'n* manner of a *hazzan* chanting an *Eil Malei Rahamim*. This passage cadences on the word *n'dirim*, eerily recalling the familiar Memorial Prayer cadence on the word *maz-hirim* (Example 14).

Dm⁶ A Dm
 a - tah ein-kha l'-vad gi - o - ra ki ba - ma - kom she - bo a - tah sho -
 A F Am⁷ Dm Am B⁷ Em Em⁶
 khein shokh - nim ha - he - sed v' - ha - hein v' - sham y' - hi - am od shar -
 Em Em⁶ Am⁷ G C
 — lo u - mei - ri - a tuv - yah m' - ga - deil a - da - yin i - ri - sim sh'ho - rim u - n' - di - rim

Example 14. *You are not by yourself, Giora, because in the place in which you are residing reside lovingkindness and grace. And there Yehiam still sings and cheers; Tuviah still grows rare black irises.*

Shemer reveals her intimate relationship with the biblical text in this poignant turn: “And there you are, and there the many young men are, about whom I would say that my help cometh from them.” (Example 15).

Dm⁶
 v' - sham a - tah v' - sham ha - mon ha - tz' - i -
 Dm⁶ Dm⁶ E^{b9}
 rim a - sher a - mar - ti ki mei - hem ya - vo ez - ri

Example 15. *And there you are, and there the many young men are, about whom I would say that my help cometh from them.*

Finally, the poet skillfully modulates the mournful mood in a very personal reflection: “In the autumn of every year I ask my soul, ‘When will I arrive there, to rest with you?’ And the pain in my heart lifts.” (Example 16).

The image shows a musical score for a song. It consists of two staves of music in 4/4 time. The first staff has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4. The melody is written on a treble clef. The lyrics are: b' - khol sha - nah ba - stav gi - o - ra a - ni sho - et et naf - shi ma - tai it - khem lish - kon a - vo v' - nah li - bi mi - makh - o - vo. The second staff continues the melody and lyrics. Chord symbols are placed above the notes: F7, Dm6, A7, Dm, E♭7, F, Am7, Dm, Am, B7, B7, E, F7, Am6.

Example 16. *In the autumn of every year I ask my soul, “When will I arrive there, to rest with you?” And the pain in my heart lifts.*

On June 26, 2004 Naomi Shemer’s soul did finally come to rest. *Y’-hi zikhrah barukh.*

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The Work of Ser Sands

The Piyyut Craze: Popularization of Mizrahi Religious Songs in the Israeli Public Sphere

By Galeet Dardashti

It's a beautiful fall Monday night on Emek Refaim, the trendiest street in The German Colony, Jerusalem's most yuppyish neighborhood. Dozens of people, mostly in their 20s, 30s and 40s, pile into the large multi-purpose room at Merkaz Tarbut LaNoar, "The Cultural Center for Youth"—men, women, Ashkenazim (Jews of European background), Mizrahi (Jews of Middle Eastern or North African background), religious, and secular. After more and more enter, however, a small crowd is turned away. "I'm so sorry, but there's no more room this semester. We are completely booked. We'll be adding an extra class soon though, and we can put you on the list for next semester." As the 80 or so people in attendance mingle, snack on cookies, and wait for the event to begin, there is an electric energy in the room, as if the crowd is anticipating a performance or lecture from a famous celebrity.

After some introductions, however, a haredi (ultra orthodox) Moroccan Jew in "typical" religious garb—black suit, white shirt, and thick beard¹—approaches the front of the room and sings a few verses of a beautiful *piyyut* (religious devotional poem) from the Jewish Moroccan-Andalusian tradition. He begins the piece with an intricate *mawal*, an Arab vocal improvisation. His flexible voice rises in chanting the Hebrew, his elaborate ornamentations often stretching single words to last up to fifteen seconds. "Companion of my soul, merciful Father, Bring your servant close to Your will. Your servant will speed like a gazelle to bow down before Your glory. Your graciousness is like the nectar of honey. Choicest of flavor." After he finishes, the group applauds, and some ululate. But this is not really a performance. The students have come to learn these *piyyutim* and sing them themselves.

1 The dress I have described used to be solely Ashkenazi ultra orthodox garb imported from Europe, but the politically powerful Sephardi religious group, Shas, has adopted this style of dress over the last few decades. There is no historical precedent for religious Sephardim or Mizrahi wearing such clothes.

Maimon Cohen, the *payy'tan* (or one trained in the art of singing *piyyutim*), then teaches the *piyyut* line by line. "First me, then you," he says. The members of the group repeat each line, some much more accurately and in tune than others, but all enthusiastically. Once the song is roughly learned, the *payy'tan* asks for volunteers to sing solos, and men and women in the group do their best to imitate the highly skilled melismatic singing of the *payy'tan*.

This is the basic format for *Kehillot Sharot* (literally "Communities Sing,") and *Yedidi HaShakhahta* (known as "Speaking Poetry" in English), two informal courses that have sprung up in the last four years in major cities such as Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Netanya, Beer Sheva and others throughout Israel. The presence and teaching of these Mizrahi *piyyutim* in the public sphere is totally unprecedented in Israel; until now, there was a clean delineation between the self-described secular Israelis and those who consider themselves religious. One would not normally expect to find a *haredi payy'tan* (who is always male) who would agree to teach in a forum where men and women sing together, and certainly none would allow for women's soloing². Equally notable is the wider public's interest in Mizrahi culture, for although over half of the Israeli population consists of Mizrahi Jews and Arabs, until recently Middle Eastern and Arab musics were marginalized and therefore largely absent from the Israeli public sphere. The surprising popularity of Mizrahi religious songs in the Israeli public sphere over the past four years is the most recent and unusual trend in the increasing Israeli interest in Middle Eastern musical styles.

In *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era*, George Yúdice argues that unlike in several decades past where culture was administered and wielded on a national scale, in today's global era, culture is coordinated on many levels, both locally and supra-nationally, by corporations, private foundations, and the international non-government sector (Yúdice 2003). Israel conforms to this model. Although the Israeli state continues to sponsor some cultural activities, both government indifference to the arts

2 The religious prohibition against women singing in the company of men (other than a daughter or wife) stems from interpretation of the phrase "*Kol be-Ishah Erva*" (Babylonian Talmud, *B'rakhot* 24A), generally translated as "the voice of a woman is erotic." Men are therefore prohibited from hearing the singing of women. Even in the Talmud itself, there are disagreements as to how this prohibition should be applied. Some argued that the prohibition only applied during formal prayer. Religious Jews today interpret *kol ishah* quite differently, but *Haredim* generally apply it most strictly, and will not listen to a woman's singing voice in live or recorded music, even if she sings as part of an ensemble with other singers or musicians.

and the need to increase government spending on security (Ben Ami: 1996) have gradually led to a dwindling of state-sponsored cultural arts programs within Israel.

Musicians and cultural arts programmers within Israel, therefore, have increasingly had to turn to individuals and foundations both locally and abroad. All of these privately-funded organizations and institutions have their own visions and agendas for Israel, and many have taken an interest in Arab and other Middle Eastern music in order to promote their particular goals. When cultural policy is diffuse and no longer largely under government control, corporations, private organizations, non-governmental organizations, and even ordinary citizens have the power to influence the cultural landscape. Yúdice views as dangerous the “globalization of culture,” in which these types of organizations fund the specific cultural programs they deem “worthy” and “ethical,” because such “cultural practice runs the risk of responding to performative injunctions...that are at least partly scripted” (Yúdice 2003: 156).

In chronicling the recent popularization of Mizraḥi *piyyutim* in Israel I will explain how the decision of a single private foundation (endowed by an American Jewish philanthropist) to heavily fund an extensive program to teach Israelis—secular and religious, Ashkenazi and Mizraḥi—to learn and appreciate Judeo-Arabic religious songs has engendered a “craze” for *piyyutim* that shows no signs of waning. I will demonstrate that the way in which this phenomenon has grown in Israel is representative of the way culture is often “used” in this global era, highlighting the cultural complexities and contradictions that arise as this music is suddenly voraciously consumed by Israeli society.

The History of *Piyyutim* in Israel

The practice of composing religious poems began as early as the sixth century in Palestine, but the golden age for *piyyutim* arrived in Spain during the Middle Ages, when Jews lived under Arab rule and Arabic was the dominant language. Arabic poetry also flourished during this period, contributing to a cultural environment that heavily influenced famous Jewish poets such as Moshe Ibn Ezra (1055-1135) and Yehuda Halevi (1075-1141). The religious poems they and others composed described the faith, longing, love, suffering, and sorrow of the Jews, who were living mostly in the diaspora. The *piyyut* traditions varied from one country to the next but always served to maintain the sense of Jewish community, often strengthening hopes of the eventual return to Zion (Scheindlin 1999).

Beginning in the 16th century, *piyyutim* served to help maintain Jewishness amidst assimilation. Many *payy'tanim* living in the Middle East and North Africa therefore composed their Hebrew poems to the tunes of secular and popular songs (originally in Arabic, Turkish, Persian, etc.) in order to keep the *piyyutim* relevant to younger people.³ Such *piyyut* traditions continued to thrive into the middle of the 20th century.⁴

Although some Middle Eastern Jews in the diaspora were very assimilated and secular before coming to Israel (e.g., many of the Iraqi Jews), most came from religious communities immersed in Jewish life, a life in which the tradition of *piyyutim* marked almost every life-cycle event. Following the difficult immigration of most Mizraḥim to Israel in the early 1950s, many communities were dispersed in squalid transit towns (*ma'abarot*) and became disconnected from many of their former traditions, including their *piyyut* practices. A few *payy'tanim*⁵ worked hard to reinstate traditions that had fallen out of practice. Although some communities did maintain their *piyyut* repertoires to some extent⁶, by the late 1980s there were few young Israelis who possessed a deep knowledge of *piyyutim*.

Yedidi HaShakhahta?

Rabbi David Buzaglo was the most renowned Moroccan Jewish *piyyut* composer and singer of the 20th century. His son, Meir Buzaglo, a prominent Professor of Jewish philosophy at the Hebrew University and a Mizraḥi activist, happens to serve on the Avi Chai Foundation's Board of Trustees. Avi Chai, a private foundation endowed by an American Jewish philanthropist:

seeks to encourage those of the Jewish faith towards greater commitment to Jewish observance and lifestyle by increasing their understanding, appreciation and practice of Jewish traditions, customs and laws [and]

3 Rabbi Yisrael Najara, one of the greatest and most prolific composers of *piyyutim*, is said to be one of the first to base his *piyyutim* on Arabic and Turkish secular songs in the 16th century.

4 Even before Iraqis immigrated to Israel in the early 1950s, the Baghdadi *bakkashot* tradition was already rarely practiced due to assimilation. Unlike the other traditions, the Baghdadi *bakkashot* were traditionally chanted every night, which made it a more difficult practice to maintain (see note 13 below).

5 Most notably, Rabbi David Buzaglo, the most renowned Moroccan Jewish poet and singer of the 20th century, who emigrated to Israel in 1962 and worked hard to revive Moroccan *piyyut* practices there.

6 Most notably, the Syrian Adas Synagogue in Jerusalem, which has—until now—preserved the Aleppo *Bakkashot* tradition.

to encourage mutual understanding and sensitivity among Jews of different religious backgrounds and commitments to observance (Avi Chai Foundation website 2005).

In 2000, Meir Buzaglo had an idea. He felt that his University offered too little in the way of Jewish culture. He proposed exposing Jewish students to Mizrahi *piyyutim* and approached Hebrew University's Beit Hillel about partnering with Avi Chai. Hillel, The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, is an international organization that encourages Jewish college students (at more than 500 colleges and universities worldwide) to explore and celebrate their Jewish identity. Their collaboration with Avi Chai was therefore a logical pairing.

After a successful fledgling pilot project during the 2002-2003 academic year, Avi Chai and Beit Hillel initiated *Yedidi HaShakhahta?* ("My friend, have you forgotten?")⁷ a project that offers weekly *piyyut* classes with trained *paiyy'tanim* for small groups of students. In addition, the project offers free monthly public concerts in which a prominent Israeli ethnic, pop or rock musician and a leading *paiyy'tan* share in an evening of music. The two don't necessarily collaborate, but ideally there is some shared time.

I learned about these concerts at Beit Hillel at the beginning of my fieldwork in March 2003 from a friend in Jerusalem who was studying at Hebrew University and had seen flyers promoting a concert. The event featured Yair Dalal, Israel's best known Ethnic music performer; Moshe Habusha, one of Israel's widely known Mizrahi *paiyy'tanim*; and the Mizrahi storyteller/comedian Jackie Levy. I was living in Tel Aviv at the time and had just begun taking Middle Eastern music courses at Yair Dalal's studio.

The concert took place at Beit Hillel's social hall. It was clear from the start that in spite of the notoriety of the performers, this concert would be quite informal. There were cookies and sodas for people to snack upon before the performance began, and the several page-long 8 ½" x 11" program featured lyrics to all of the *piyyutim* to be sung that evening. The elderly Iraqi man sitting on my right donned a knitted *kippah*,⁸ as did perhaps 30% of the

7 *Yedidi Ha-Shakhahta* is the name of a well-known piyyut written by the famous piyy'tan and poet Yehuda Halevi of 11th century Spain. The name for the program was also chosen as a play on words to remind Israelis that they had abandoned and "forgotten" their piyyut practices and heritage.

8 *Kippah* is the Hebrew word for a religious head covering, sometimes known as a yarmulke or skullcap. The type of kippah that one wears in Israel indicates the religious group with which one identifies himself. A knitted kippah represents Datee Leumi, or Religious Zionist affiliation, a Modern-Orthodox Zionist group.

others in attendance, and another 10% wore Bukhari *kippot*⁹. Though some were beyond middle age, most of the audience members were college-aged students, half of whom dressed as secular Israelis. By the time the concert began, the audience numbered over 200 people.

After a few introductions, Yair Dalal and Moshe Habusha took the stage. Although both men are second-generation Mizraḥim of Iraqi Jewish lineage, their stage personas are quite different. Dalal wore fashionable circular spectacles, and his long, curly black hair was pulled back in a fuchsia ponytail holder. His loose-fitting *sharwal kameez* (white blouse) extended to his knees, and his black flowing pants tapered at the ankles with a colorful lining of flowers; his feet were adorned in brown sandals. The stern Habusha wore a dark-colored suit and black *kippah*. The two played an instrumental piece together—Habusha on oud, Dalal on violin, and additional performers on bass and percussion. They also performed a few *piyyutim* together, alternating on verses. Then, each played some of his own pieces. Habusha performed a few solo *piyyutim* of his choice, introduced with the intricate spur-of-the-moment mawalim for which he is famous. Dalal performed a Bedouin song in Arabic and an instrumental self-composed piece that combined Eastern modes and rhythms with a bit of bluegrass fiddling.

In between every few songs, Jackie Levy, a Mizraḥi Jew of Iraqi background, known for poking fun of his Mizraḥi identity, told stories. His theme that evening was the unclear boundary between the sacred and the mundane, which, he explained, was the perfect way to frame *piyyutim*. All of his jokes that evening centered around Mizraḥim — often in their relations with Arabs. In one story, he spoke of “the good old days” in Syria when the religious Jews (who took their Arab music very seriously) corrected the *muezzin*¹⁰ when he didn’t sing the *maqam* (Arab mode) correctly. In another, Levy described the raucous singing emitting from a Moroccan Jewish wedding in Jerusalem, where Israeli-Palestinian workers outside listened on. When a few Mizraḥim exited the hall, one of the workers exclaimed, “Wow, you guys still do that one? I think that was a song that our grandparents sang!” The delighted crowd laughed, clapped, and sang the *piyyutim* along with the performers.

9 *Kippot*, plural for *kippah*. Bukhari *kippot* are large woven *kippot* which much less clearly mark a religious affiliation. These are worn by younger Israelis—both Ashkenazim and Mizraḥim—who are generally claiming a newer, more progressive, and often a more “spiritual” form of Judaism. For young Mizraḥim, this is also often symbolic of the roots with which they are connecting, even if they are not Bukharan.

10 The *muezzin* chants the call to prayer for Muslims five times a day.

This was my introduction to the popularization of Mizrahi *piyyutim* in Israel. I soon learned of the ambitious *Kehillot Sharot* project, a *piyyut* initiative directed not primarily at Israeli university students but at Israelis of all ages.

Kehillot Sharot

Yossi Ohana, the founder of *Kehillot Sharot*, was born in the Atlas Mountains in Morocco in a Berber community. His father was 67 at the time, his mother decades younger. When he and his family immigrated to Israel in the 1950s, he was four years old. They lived in a development town with mostly other low-income Mizrahim, but as he grew, it embarrassed him when his parents played Arab music in the house: he preferred The Beatles.

In the early 1990s his brother took him to a concert of Andalusian *piyyutim* in Caesaria. He was moved by the intricacy and beauty of the songs, and by the size of the crowd—there were thousands of Moroccans. “I couldn’t believe that this concert wasn’t advertised at all in the Israeli media. I felt that it should have more of a presence in mainstream society.” Later, he became a devoted activist for Mizrahi rights and culture as a founding member of The Mizrahi Rainbow Coalition (*HaKeshet HaDemokratit HaMizrahit*), the primary secular social justice and Mizrahi activist organization in Israel.

Years later he appealed to the Avi Chai Foundation to support his brainchild, *Kehillot Sharot*. As Ohana acknowledges, “If I had started the program even two years earlier, it would probably not have taken off as it did.” With the increasing popularity of Arab and other Middle Eastern music in Israel, Yossi felt that Israelis might finally get excited about *piyyutim*. For him, *piyyutim* offered an excellent opportunity for Ashkenazim to recognize the depth of Mizrahi culture. In Yossi Ohana’s 2002 grant proposal to the Avi Chai Foundation (written in English), he states:

Piyyut not only connects different population groups; it is also one of the main mechanisms for the transmission, preservation, and evolution of the tradition. It is important to note that this is a non-threatening, non-coercive, very vital mode of transmission.

...For some..., the aesthetic aspect of *piyyut* has a powerful attractive force. Taking advantage of the opportunity to expose them to *piyyut* as an original form of expression of Judaism may lead them to think about and focus seriously on their identity, even though they did not start out with such a goal in mind.

The brief remarks above point out the potential vitality of piyyut for uniting people from different Jewish backgrounds through love of poetry and music, and in the process strengthening their Jewish identity and their attachment to their heritage in a friendly, beneficial manner (Ohana 2002: 1).

On the following page the proposal also states later that one of the goals of the proposed “*Kehillot Sharot*” would be to investigate how “*piyyut* can contribute to strengthening the weak sense of community in Israel, to ensure continuity and to stimulate Jewish revival” (Ohana 2002: 2).

Although the above was written by Ohana in his efforts to garner financial support for *Kehillot Sharot* from the Avi Chai Foundation, it reads like a state-sponsored platform for Israeli cultural nationalism. The goals of the project are unambiguous. In line with the Avi Chai Foundation’s vision, it seeks to foster Jewish identity—in particular among the unaffiliated—and in doing so, it hopes to create a sense of Jewish community among Israelis in a “friendly,” “non-threatening,” and “non-coercive” way. The Avi Chai Foundation approved the funding.

The course meets weekly for 2 ½ hours and includes multi-week units concentrating on different *piyyut* traditions, such as Andalusian (North African), Babylonian (Iraqi), and the Sephardi-Yerushalmi tradition (mostly influenced today by Turkish and Syrian *piyyutim*). Units are taught by a representative *payy’tan* from each religious community. Other short units, which last for one or two classes, include the Yemenite women’s tradition, and the one or two token non-Mizraḥi class sessions devoted to Hasidic *piyyutim*.¹¹ The class also featured guest appearances from “star” *payy’tanim* and ethnic musicians such as Yair Dalal and Moshe Habusha.

In addition to the classes, *KS* organizes special visits to Mizraḥi synagogues to hear the midnight *Seliḥot*¹² services during the month of Elul, and to the early morning 2 a.m. *Shabbat Shirat HaBakkashot*¹³ at Jerusalem synagogues,

11 Perhaps unsurprisingly, far fewer students attended those non-Mizraḥi class sessions. Many Mizraḥi students told me that they had no interest in learning Hasidic *piyyutim*.

12 The month of Elul is a time of repentance in preparation for the High Holidays of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. In the Sephardic tradition, *seliḥot* (special *piyyutim* asking for forgiveness) are chanted every night around midnite or in the early morning hours around 5:30 am, during the month of Elul and continuing through Yom Kippur, except on Shabbat.

13 *Bakkashot* are a specific repertoire of *piyyutim* sung in some Mizraḥi Jewish communities on Shabbat in the Winter time (between the Jewish holidays of Simḥat Torah and Pesah) from the middle of the night (beginning anywhere between 12 to

including the famous Aleppo synagogue, “Ades,” in Jerusalem’s Nahlaot neighborhood. The regular members of the synagogues are generally pleasantly surprised to see these new faces taking an interest in their tradition, and were particularly tickled when we (the members of the class) joined in on the songs we had just learned at *Kehillot Sharot*. The few women who regularly attend the *bakkashot* were particularly delighted since we increased their numbers significantly.

The Hevra¹⁴

One of the most unique aspects of *Kehillot Sharot* is the wide diversity of the student base it attracts, which is due in part to the savvy marketing. The ads for *Kehillot Sharot* prominently feature the course’s title, “The magical journey of the *Piyyut*.” Swirling designs reminiscent of the magical smoke wafting from the lamp in the 70s TV show “I dream of Genie” surround the title and much of the flyer. Ohana chose the title partially as a tribute to The Beatles’ “Magical Mystery Tour,” and though he acknowledges its “kitschiness,” he wanted to ensure that the course appealed to diverse audiences. “It got the job done,” he explained. The flyer also mentions that students will have the opportunity to meet and study with Israel’s well-known “Ethnic” musicians Shlomo Bar and Yair Dalal, and with two of Israel’s most established Mizrahi *payy’tan* superstars Haim Look and Moshe Habusha. In this way, the poster appeals to a wide variety of potential participants. It attracts those looking for a New Age¹⁵-type “magically” spiritual, yet “authentically” exotic Middle Eastern experience, but it also beckons to those drawn to the Mizrahi or religious Jewish tradition as represented by beloved Master’s such as Habusha and Look.

My own involvement as a participant in *Kehillot Sharot* seemed completely natural to all of the teachers and students. As we went around the room near the beginning of the course, I explained my motivation for participating. Although I identified myself as an American anthropologist conducting research on Mizrahi and Arab traditional musical styles, most quickly forgot about

4 a.m., depending on the community) until approximately 7 a.m. when the morning prayers begin. Many of the *piyyutim* sung during *Bakkashot* are connected to specific Torah portions and are therefore sung only on specific Shabbatot.

14 A Hebrew word meaning “the group.”

15 The New Age subculture in Israel is a particularly Jewish variety. It rejects many aspects of traditional Jewish practice but is drawn to the spiritual elements of Judaism while incorporating many of the common global New Age objects such as crystals, incense, and Native American dream catchers.

this unless I reminded them. Even on the rare days that I brought in my video camera or shot a few pictures with my digital camera I didn't seem conspicuous, as I wasn't the only one documenting the class. Most students showed up with their cassette or minidisk recorders weekly so that they could learn the *piyyutim*, and some periodically shot photos of the class and teachers.

The fact that I was an American was not really an obstacle to my being accepted as part of the class, as Israel is largely an immigrant country, and there were a handful of others in the class who had recently immigrated to Israel from France, Canada, and the United States. It certainly helped that I was of Mizraḥi background and one of the best singers in the class, holding my own when singing even the *piyyutim* with quartertones. A few of the students were pleasantly surprised and asked jokingly, "Are you really American?"

I was also able to connect with the teachers (the *paiyy'tanim*) since near the beginning of the course I had brought them copies of rare recordings of my grandfather singing the *piyyutim* of *selihot* from the Persian tradition as well as some of the Persian classical pieces for which he was nationally renowned as a singer in Iran. Dudi, one of the teachers, showed up for class one day and promptly announced to me that his father had fallen in love with my grandfather's voice and refused to surrender the tapes. My family lineage granted me honorary status in the class—especially among the *paiyy'tanim*—as not only one with a scholarly and musical interest in the field, but someone with roots in the tradition.

On the third week of class, we all went around the room and introduced ourselves and stated why we had decided to take the class:

This experience is amazing for me, I'm from Tunis. I learned to curse these sounds and the countries they were from. This experience brings me to something very deep that until now was forbidden to me.

I believe in the power of the desert. I decided to come to this class because I know that this music is what my soul needs to live.

I was born in Roumania. When I used to hear Middle Eastern music, I didn't like it. But I learned gradually to hear the refinement of this music and now I enjoy every moment.

I used to hear this in the house but I'd run away from it. So now I guess you could say that I'm returning to my roots.

Like, these sounds take me to another dimension, you know, somewhere that's closer to the truth.

I'm an Iraqi Jew. I sing these songs every week on Shabbat. I wanted to come and learn the *piyyutim* from other traditions as well. That sounded like fun.

Somehow, even in Israel's ever more polarized society, *Kehillot Sharot* seems to appeal to almost everyone. The diversity of the participants *Kehillot Sharot* bring together produces beautiful, rare and exciting moments for participants and teachers. Dudu the youngest *payy'tan* at *Kehillot Sharot*, laughed as he related the story of his first performance in front of a secular and mostly Ashkenazi audience in Israel:

I was nervous because it wasn't an audience I was used to performing for — you know, the kind at the *chaflot*¹⁶ with all the Iraqis that sing along with “*ya'eli ya'eli*” and drink beer. And here I was on stage with everyone staring and actually paying attention. But I myself was moved at that concert. I got on the stage and looked into the audience and saw young Ashkenazi blonde women! I said to myself, “Oh no, how did we get here, they're going to throw tomatoes at us!” I was nervous. But after I sang, this blonde woman across from me in the audience is smiling at me and clapping and I said to myself. “God, almighty, look, the Messiah has come! It killed me completely” (Interview with author: 2004).

I asked Maimon Cohen, the most religious of the *payy'tanim*, whether it was difficult for him to agree to teach *piyyutim* in an environment where women were allowed to sing solos. He stated:

From a *Halakhic* [Jewish law] standpoint, I had to break a psychological barrier. But how many women in our community normally go to hear *piyyutim*? Maybe four or five... So, would I think that Ashkenazim would want to come? No. So for us, it's like...it's fun. During my last concert at the synagogue, 300 people were there and 85% are not Moroccans at all and they are sitting and learning Moroccan *piyyutim*. It warms the heart. It's no joke. There were Moroccans there that simply cried from happiness. I mean...it's as if we're finally on the map. It's no joke.

Recruiting the Unaffiliated

As explained above, both *Kehillot Sharot* and *Yedidi HaShakhahta* are openly invested in bringing together divergent types of Israelis through *piyyutim*, especially the religious with the unaffiliated. Both projects have and continue to successfully achieve their goals. There are also, however, the uncomfortably bizarre moments that emerged from the comingling of these divergent groups—particularly the secular hippy/New Age-types with the traditionally devout. At three separate performances of Mizrahi *piyyutim* I attended (including both formal and informal), at least one woman decided to get up and belly dance. Even though the sacred texts of the *payy'tan* were in Hebrew and the dancer was always Israeli (whose native language was Hebrew), the

16 A festive Arab party.

disjuncture between the words and tone of the religious poem he chanted and the erotic gyrations of the belly dancer could not have been more palpable. At one performance, the bright stage lights prevented the *payy'tan* from seeing the women because they danced towards the back of the room; in another, the *payy'tan* pretended not to notice; and in yet another, the singer got up in the middle of the *piyyut* and walked away in disgust.

In Shelley Errington's *The Death of Authentic Primitive Art and Other Tales of Progress* (1998), she argues that the progress narrative has been turned on its head by what she terms "The New Age spiritual evolution" occurring all over the world. The earlier version placed the official white European males' brand of civilization at the top, and the dark peoples who inhabit nature at the bottom. The new age metanarrative places the "indigenous shamans and artists" at the top of the totem pole, with the "new age seekers of higher spiritual truth" in the middle and the corporate CEOs at the bottom. However, this new model tends to be as reified and essentialist as the older one. The primitives are still primitive, only now it is their very primitiveness that is lauded by the civilized (Errington 1998: 35-36).

It is for this reason that many of the Israeli New Age spiritual seekers are attracted to the Mizrahi "magic" of *Kehillot Sharot*. Some of them are attracted to *piyyutim* as a Jewish alternative to secularism or Orthodox fanaticism. For others, however, it doesn't necessarily matter what country, culture, or religion the *payy'tan* comes from. What is important is that he possesses an ancient "authentic" wisdom from a "magical," exotic and less rational world. According to Wouter Hanegraaff, "The globalization of New Age Spirituality is more appropriately seen as an aspect of global Americanization. American values of democracy and religious freedom are intimately linked to the New Age phenomenon of a 'spiritual supermarket,' where customers pick and choose spiritual commodities they fancy" (2001: 16). In this way, the global New Age movement, like some forms of world music, tends to facilitate the glossing over of difference.

Because New Age is often defined in terms of its reaction against aspects of dominant Western culture, one would expect New Age movements in non-Western countries to criticize cultural imperialist attempts to impose Western values on indigenous cultures, and to pay tribute to the local spiritual traditions of the countries in question. Recent research, however, has found that some New Age movements have alienated local communities, who ac-

cuse the New Agers of disrespecting their sacred spiritual traditions and of Western spiritual imperialism¹⁷ (Hanegraaff 2001: 22-23).

Kehillot Sharot, however, is a sincere and serious movement with deep historical grounding, and one that states openly its intent to recover silenced voices of the past. Because of its clear criticism of the Israeli-Western cultural hegemony, its commitment to teaching traditional Eastern musical traditions, and the opportunity it presents to Israelis to connect to an unaffiliated and what they view as a more spiritual form of Judaism, *Kehillot Sharot* successfully attracts a good number of Israeli New Age seekers. According to Ohana, they were always part of *Kehillot Sharot's* target population. Many of these Israelis refer to themselves as *ruhanit* (spiritual), as opposed to Jewish. Yet although *Kehillot Sharot* clearly strives to attract these Israelis, who would normally be drawn to Buddhism, Hinduism, and other religions of the Far East, it is, in fact, deeply entrenched in revitalizing specific Jewish musical traditions from many different countries. Rather than the tradition being co-opted, the classes are taught by those who have become its culture bearers—some with the help of *Kehillot Sharot*, and almost all of the *payy'tanim* and course facilitators are of Mizraḥi heritage.¹⁸

Nevertheless, Steven Feld cautions, “the intentions surrounding a recording’s original production...cannot be controlled once a commodity is in commercial circulation” (Feld 1996: 11). This same reality can hold true in the context of live music. By introducing his sacred songs into the public sphere, the *payy'tan* shares his art with a much wider audience, but in the process he also relinquishes control of how it is used or fetishized. Sometimes, it doesn't matter that the *payy'tan* himself is there chanting, or that the words that he sings are “Master of the Universe, You are the King who rules every king,” for when the dancer hears the Middle Eastern rhythms and the melismatic tones, she feels she knows the script. The dancer's hips come to a halt only when the *payy'tan* refuses to continue singing the *piyyut* and the music stops.

Righting the Wrongs of the Past

17 The Lakota Indians published an official declaration of war against the New Age movement in 1993, accusing its leaders of ethnocentrism and disrespect for its religious practices (Hanegraaff 2001 22-23).

18 The only classes not taught by Mizraḥi *payy'tanim* were the very few classes taught on *Hasidic piyyutim*. Although Esti Kenan-Ofri, a facilitator for one of the courses in Jerusalem, is not of Mizraḥi background, she is a singer who has completely dedicated her self to the study and performance of Mizraḥi and Ladino music, and was previously married to a Yemenite Jew.

Though the Avi Chai Foundation's primary incentive for supporting *Kehillot Sharot* is its ability to unite the highly divided population of Israeli Jews through Jewish poetry and music, the course also serves those interested in elevating the prominence of Mizraḥi culture in Israel. Many students are Mizraḥim—some of whom are completely secular but interested in connecting with a newly appealing aspect of their culture, while others are completely affiliated religious Mizraḥim interested in learning more.

"How could people in this country not know about Rabbi Yisrael Najara¹⁹? It's a pity," bemoaned Esti, a prominent singer of Jewish Sephardi and Mizraḥi music in Israel and a facilitator in one of the Jerusalem *Kehillot Sharot* courses. "No other country would have thrown away such a treasure, but we have, so now we want to expose it to people." Such sentiments are shared by all of the staff members in the *Kehillot Sharot* program and repeated at various moments throughout the course, whether during the class itself or at *piyyut* performances sponsored by *Kehillot Sharot* for the larger community.

During the first class in our unit on Iraqi *piyyutim*, Dudi, the *payy'tan*, lectured briefly about the background of Rabbi Yisrael Najara and presented us with select *piyyutim* from the *bakkashot* repertoire sung in the Iraqi community. "In Baghdad, many, like my grandfather, would get up at midnight and begin the *bakkashot*. Today, people have gotten lazy. It's more like 3 a.m." Everyone laughed, and then Dudi explained how Jewish high school students in Baghdad would study the *piyyutim* diligently in school. An older man in the class shouted out, "Do they teach Najara to kids in high school here [in Israel] today?" Everyone laughed knowingly. "Not yet,"²⁰ said the facilitator. "Only Amos Oz."²¹

Such political issues are discussed in class in a relaxed and safe atmosphere. The class draws a fair number of current and past members of *HaKeshet HaDemokratit HaNizraḥit* and other Mizraḥi political organizations. But

19 Rabbi Yisrael Najara was one of the most well-known and prolific *payy'tanim* of his time. Born around 1555 in Damascus, he later moved to Tsfat where he became known as an esteemed Kabbalist. Of the four hundred and fifty *piyyutim* that Rav Najara is said to have composed, his most famous piece is *Yah Ribon Olam*, a popular *piyyut* written in Aramaic and sung in numerous Jewish ethnic communities with various melodies on Shabbat evening.

20 Although Israeli high school students do not receive a great deal of *piyyutim* in their education, there are one or two *piyyutim* included in their curriculum (such as *Yonat Rehokim* and *Yedidi HaShakhaḥta*).

21 Amos Oz is a prominent contemporary Israeli writer. He also happens to be a secular Ashkenazi Israeli.

they don't come to *Kehillot Sharot* to gripe against Ashkenazim. They come to celebrate their culture with a class almost halfway full of Ashkenazim. As one Ashkenazi member of *Kehillot Sharot's* Tel Aviv group, Uri Goldberg, stated, "It's really nice, in my opinion, that in spite of the fact that this is clearly elevating the prestige of Mizraḥi culture, the issue isn't raised in an antagonistic way or from anger (as opposed to *HaKeshet HaDemokratit HaMizrahit*) but rather from a desire to approach things with amicability, so that people can be exposed to the beauty within it" (Charutei-Sover: 2005, author's translation).

Each person who signs up for a class receives a *Kehillot Sharot* booklet. In addition to the lyrics of the *piyyutim* learned in the class, the booklets provide information on Middle Eastern music theory, short blurbs on the history of *piyyutim* from each tradition and short bios on fifteen of the most important *payy'tanim*. The first page of the book offers a short general history on the important role of *piyyutim* in uniting Jewish communities in the Middle East and what happened when most Mizraḥim immigrated to Israel in the early 1950s. As stated on page one:

After the immigration to Israel and the difficult absorption crisis that occurred, the Jewish communities that arrived from the Middle East lost the homogeneity and the lifestyle of community life and culture. The physical hardships of physical survival together with the establishment's disregard for their Jewish values of the diaspora and the different communities that formed them, caused a feeling of destruction, uprooting, and decline. (*Kehillot Sharot* 2003: 1)

The text continues to explain the way in which the above situation caused the decline of the *piyyut* traditions once the communities had entered Israel and that it almost seemed that it would disappear completely. But the section ends on a positive note, stating that *piyyutim* are making a comeback in Israel and implying that those participating in the course are a part of this exciting time (*Kehillot Sharot* 2003: 2).

The Internet

In September 2005, the Avi Chai Foundation embarked upon perhaps its most ambitious *piyyut* project yet, the extensive website (www.piyyut.org.il), "An Invitation to *Piyyut*." The website provides information about *Kehillot Sharot's* mission and approach, its teachers, the locations for its now nine different classes offered throughout the country, and testimonials from participants from the class. The website is much more than an informational PR piece for *Kehillot Sharot*, however. It offers links to informational and academic

articles on every aspect of the *piyyut*; detailed scholarly articles explaining the poetic and religious significance of each word of hundreds of *piyyutim*; video interviews with *payy'tanim*; and personal reflections on *piyyutim* from artists, scholars, *payy'tanim*, and lay people.

But by far the most impressive and groundbreaking elements are the over 1,000 recordings of different versions of several hundred *piyyutim* from various traditions available for listening on the website. This vast audio library is searchable by ethnic group, Jewish holiday, lifecycle event, musical mode, or by the author of the *piyyut*. Yossi Ohana explained the thought behind creating the website:

There are the gatekeepers—the media, TV, the radio, etc.—those who determine what people should or should not like. Unfortunately, they don't offer people the possibility of being exposed to a variety of music. It's not available. You can't hear it on radio or TV. So, the assumption with the website is that through the internet, you can overcome those barriers. Thank God, the website now receives more than 40,000 hits each month. (Interview with Author: 2005)

Yossi's pride in the success of *Kehillot Sharot* is apparent. The fact that all of these *piyyutim* are loose in the global marketplace, however, has caused Yossi and some of the *payy'tanim* a bit of concern. But he is realistic.

We've had many conversations and disagreements about this issue at *Kehillot Sharot*. But, I think it's a kind of luxury to feel nervous about it being out there. In everything there are advantages and disadvantages. The positive reactions to it outweigh the concern because people have access to it now. I used to be much more guarded about this but now I'm more flexible. All of the *piyyutim* are at risk...we have lost so much. People don't learn these at schools. The traditional ways of studying and composing were destroyed. So, we need to strengthen the base. (Interview with author: 2005)

In 2006, the website expanded its website to include an English version and now receives 60,000 hits monthly from international visitors.

Rockstars and Piyyutim

In 2003 the first all-Israeli music channel (Channel 24) emerged on cable TV. During that year, the well-known rock band *Nekamat HaTraktor* (The Tractor's Revenge) was featured on the new show, "The Main Stage." The show was essentially a battle of the bands for Israeli pop/rock music. The band closed the show with their own take of *Adon HaS'lihot* ("Master of Forgiveness"), probably the most commonly known Mizrahi *S'lihot piyyut* in Israel.

The band had recorded the song on their first album in 1990. Since then, the band has released several albums (none with any other piyyut renditions). In 2003, however, they chose *Adon ha-Selihot* as one of the two or three songs that would represent the band to the entire country.

This was only the beginning. A 2004 Tel Aviv concert called “Yehuda Halevi on the Corner of Ibn Gabirol” (a play on the names of two renowned Sephardic *payy’tanim* from the Middle Ages who also have streets in Tel Aviv named after them) featured Israel’s biggest pop and rock singers, including Ehud and Evyatar Banai, Micah Sheetrit, Barry Sakharov, Maor Cohen, Eti Ankri, Yonatan and Aharon Razel and others performing new and traditional musical versions of several *piyyutim*. Many of these performers had been invited to perform at Beit Hillel in the past. Yet this performance in Tel Aviv’s *Heykhal HaTarbut* (one of Tel Aviv’s largest performance venues) was several orders of magnitude more public and received much more media attention. In addition, unlike the other performances of the past—all sponsored by the Avi Chai Foundation—this concert was produced by Nitzan Ze’ira.

Like his father and grandfather, Ze’ira is no stranger to the Israeli music scene. After some forty years working in the industry, today he is one of Israel’s biggest music producers of mainstream Israeli rock and the founder of the label Na’ana Disc. Ze’ira produced the concert with sponsorship from *Mif’al Hapayis*, (the Israeli Lottery) and \$45,000 of his own funds. He is supportive of the work that Beit Hillel does, but wanted to take things to a more “professional” level.

Although Ze’ira is Ashkenazi, this concert marked his personal protest in favor of promoting Hebrew culture in Israel. According to him, the state invests forty million dollars a year in musical programming in Israel and thirty-eight million goes toward European classical music—music Ze’ira refers to as “Christian music.” Although the state normally pitches in for high culture performances at *Heichal HaTarbut* by subsidizing the \$10,000 it costs to rent the hall, it refused to do this for Ze’ira’s *piyyut* concert:

We built a little Russia, a little Poland. The government supports the Israeli Philharmonic performing Brahms and Mozart but they won’t support our own Hebrew culture. I think Ibn Gabirol²² is the best poet ever. Dunash Ben Labrat²³ lived the Hebrew language and wrote beautiful songs. He

22 Solomon ibn Gabirol (who lived from approximately 1021-1058 in Spain) was an Andalusian Hebrew poet and Jewish philosopher.

23 Dunash ben Labrat (who lived from 920-990) was a medieval Jewish commentator, poet, and grammarian born in the city of Fez, Morocco. He was known for being one of the first to introduce many Arabic poetic forms in his Hebrew poetry. His most well-known *piyyut* is *Dror Yikra*.

was the real Ben Yehuda²⁴—the Guardian of the Hebrew language. He is important to our country...This concert was my own private joke. I thought, let's have a concert of Hebrew poetry at *Heikhal HaTarbut*, to laugh at the City. Before the concert, we changed ten of the street names in Tel Aviv as part of this joke. We changed Ibn Gabirol Street to Bach Street...We got a lot of press. The concert was packed... They [the Ministry of Culture] are losing money with the concerts they produce [concerts of Western classical music] but they don't care because they want to be a part of international culture. Israel needs a revolution. The problem is not the military. The problem is the culture. (Interview with author, September 2006).

Ze'ira's concert of protest marked quite a digression from the musical repertoire of most of the participating musicians²⁵ and the Israeli music scene took notice. As the *payy'tan* Roni Ish-Ran stated in a newspaper interview, "When top-of-the-line artists give a blessing to the fusion of traditional texts from ancient Hebrew and combine them with contemporary music, that grants the genre eternal life" (Arlichman: 2005, author's translation).

Even this concert, however, was eclipsed by the final event in the 2006 Festival Yisrael (Israel's most esteemed music festival), a concert entitled *Yedidi HaShakhahta?*. Sponsored by the Avi Chai Foundation but produced by Festival Yisrael, the concert took place in the immense *Breikhat HaSultan* (Sultan's Pool). Situated between the Old City walls and Yemin Moshe, the impressive outdoor amphitheatre often features international pop stars such as Sting, Bob Dylan, and Eric Clapton. The press (as per the press release) listed the concert as "A Night of *Piyyutim* with a Link to the Sources but Enveloped in a Contemporary Sound—the best singers of Israeli song singing songs of prayer, festival, love, wine and nature with contemporary arrangements." The concert featured eight of Israel's biggest rock stars, including Ehud Banai, Meir Banai, Aviatar Banai, Barry Sakharov, Rami Fortim, Michah Shitrit, and others. Yet unlike previous concerts sponsored by Beit Hillel and Avi Chai, the presence of traditional *payy'tanim* was conspicuously wanting.

The Festival organizers initially asked the well known *payy'tan* Moshe Habusha to perform in the concert, but he declined. Ironically, according to Dudi Menachem, "Habusha couldn't participate. It was too huge and mainstream.

24 Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (who lived from 1858 –1922), was principally responsible for the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language in Palestine from its previous state as a liturgical language exclusively.

25 Although some of these musicians had performed *piyyutim* for the *Yedidi HaShakhahta* program, these concerts were small and had not reached the Israeli mainstream.

Habusha lives in the haredi world. The concert received so much press...it would have been very bad for him” (Interview with author: 2006). Although Habusha received permission from Rabbi Ovadia Yosef (Israel’s Chief Sephardic Rabbi) to teach for mixed-sex groups (which is normally prohibited in the haredi world), this was actually too high-profile, commercial, and secular a setting for his haredi community to justify as Jewish “outreach.” Exposing secular Israelis to quality Mizrahi culture is a worthy cause, but there are boundaries. Performing as the featured musician at *Beit HaKonfederatsiya* or *Beit Hillel* for a few hundred people is not the same as sharing the stage with eight secular rock stars for 6,000 screaming fans.

Once Habusha declined, the festival organizers abandoned any proposals from Avi Chai for parity between rock singers and *payy’tanim*. In the end, only one *payy’tan*, Lior Elmaliach, performed along with the rockers and his role was quite marginal. Although Avi Chai footed the bill and proposed the idea to the Festival, they did not have programmatic control. The organizers decided that they wanted a star-studded Festival finale. Rabbi Yisrael Najara and Ibn Gabirol weren’t sexy enough without a stage full of celebrities.

Even Ohana expressed concern over too much commercialization in the context of what should have been considered the most triumphant public relations blitz ever for piyyutim in Israel. Some audience members, Mizrahi in particular, were disappointed with the concert. As Ohana complained, “The vision wasn’t parallel. It’s nice that the stars joined the process and became a part of it, but it’s problematic to organize this event without the *payy’tanim*. This is a sensitive subject and many people were very upset about it (Interview with author 2006).” Karen Weiss, Project Officer at the Avi Chai Foundation and the overseer of both *Kehillot Sharot* and Speaking Poetry, acknowledged that the concert had not accomplished all that she and others at the organization had hoped, but was still upbeat. “Look, we weren’t thrilled with every aspect of it, but it was a concert at Sultan’s Pool in Festival Yisrael and 6,000 people were there. In this framework, we did our best. The [rock] singers performed piyyutim within their own traditions in their own way” (Interview with author 2006).

The idea of bringing together *payy’tanim* and rock stars for large Israeli audiences was certainly a savvy product placement technique for Avi Chai and Hillel in their quest to get young Israelis excited about *piyyutim* and Judaism. What they did not anticipate, however, was the way in which the rock stars themselves would be influenced by their encounters with Israeli *payy’tanim*. After being exposed to *piyyutim* and performing them with *payy’tanim* in the context of Avi Chai’s programs, many of these well-known Israeli musicians

and others approached Avi Chai and asked for their own *Kehillot Sharot*-type course on *piyyutim*. Avi Chai immediately responded affirmatively and is now helping to plan an exclusive *piyyut* course (modeled after *Kehillot Sharot*) in Tel Aviv whose students will include some of Israel's most noted secular rockers including Barry Sakharov, Micha Shitrit, Leah Shabbat, David Deor, and members of the band *Knessiyat HaSekhel*.

As Karen Weiss of Avi Chai described these plans to me, I asked her if she was surprised by the major cultural impact that Avi Chai is effecting in Israel. Weiss quickly tempered my grand questioning. "I think effecting cultural change in Israel is too ambitious a goal for the Avi Chai Foundation. Our agenda is very specific and modest. We want to combine diverse people in Israel for Jewish study. If things are taken to be more meaningful, we are happy, but it's not really our goal" (Interview with author 2006). I accepted her comments but wondered why an organization that donates millions of dollars annually toward "the perpetuation of the Jewish people, Judaism, and the centrality of the State of Israel to the Jewish people" (Avi Chai website 2005) would disavow a desire to effect change. Nevertheless, Weiss did not hide her pride in the activities that Avi Chai has helped to stimulate in Israel. Her hope, however, is that the recent interest among Israelis in *piyyutim* is more than a fad. "If it is a trend, it will go away as quickly as it came" (Interview with author 2006).

Conclusion

It is not possible to explain the recent popularity of Middle Eastern music and in particular of *piyyutim* today in Israel through a neat and totalizing singular model. In spite of Avi Chai's hesitancy to acknowledge it, there is no question that the hundreds of thousands of dollars that this one private foundation has invested in successfully pushing forward its own agenda of uniting secular and religious Israelis has made a great impact on the cultural landscape. The State today has become merely one of numerous players in the control and invocation of culture. In today's global era, however, it is through the combined influence of forces such as private funding, global trends, New Age spirituality, ethnic pride, politics, and state cultural policy that cultural innovation occurs.

This unique nationalist movement in Israel marks the collapse of a unitary secular Ashkenazi hegemony and its replacement by myriad fragmented Israeli national identities. As Baruch Kimmerling explains it:

Although they are engaged in sharpening their own identities, the boundaries around these identities, and their institutional and political infrastructures, Israel's diverse ethnic, religious, racial...cultures are not ready to give up the common denominator of their claim to partnership and share-holding in the Israeli state. All of them aspire to remain 'Israelis' politically and Jews (or Arabs) ethnically or nationally. Nevertheless, the meaning of this Israeliness is very different from its original monocultural and hegemonic content and definition...Everyone desires to share the common goods, but on their own terms and in their own interests (Kimmerling 2001: 235).

Through an analysis of the popularization of Mizrahi *piyyutim* in Israel today, we are afforded an understanding of the numerous ways in which cultural products in today's globalized world become imbued with symbolic and political meanings both similar and quite different from the "scripted" meanings defined by their financial sponsors. For Mizrahi activists such as Meir Buzaglo, Yossi Ohana, and many of the Mizrahi *Kehillot Sharot* participants, Mizrahi *piyyutim* allow a long overdue recognition by the Ashkenazi-centric Israeli society of the depth and richness of Mizrahi culture; for Nitzan Ze'ira, *piyyutim* represent his revolution of Hebrew culture and language against the Israeli Ministry of Culture; for religious *payy'tanim*, the elevated status of *piyyutim* gives them and their Jewish traditions recognition and status in the highly secular Israeli mainstream; for Israeli Jewish "New Agers," *piyyutim* offer spiritual meaning in a non-threatening and "groovy" format; for young Mizrahim and many Israeli rock stars of Mizrahi descent, *piyyutim* provide a connection to a cultural heritage that most are only now discovering. Though they have diverse agendas, all are invested in the reclamation and reinvention of a musical genealogy that they feel is vital to their identity as contemporary Israelis. As the nation loses its grip on the collective imagination, we are witnessing a reconfiguration of previous identities of Israeliness. As we have seen above, however, the fluidity of these identities often leads to a complicated interplay between those involved. These myriad convergences will continue to yield complicated and unpredictable cultural encounters.

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Contemporary Ashkenazi Synagogue Music in Israel: Some Aspects of Change in a Relocated Tradition¹

by *Amalia Kedem*

Introduction

In discussing present-day Ashkenazi liturgical music, scholars have observed that this musical tradition is not identical to that found in pre-war Europe. Although directly linked to its European roots, the currently practiced tradition has undergone significant changes, brought about by major modern historical events like the Holocaust of European Jewry and the founding of the Jewish State.² Very few studies, however, have focused on these changes and their manifestations in what today may be considered the center of living Jewish traditions, namely, the State of Israel.³ In this article I hope to add to

1 This article is adapted from a lecture delivered at the 14th World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, August 2005, and is not meant as a conclusive statement of findings but rather as a provisional report of research currently being done. I hereby thank my husband, Yonatan, and my colleague, Dr. Boaz Tarsi from JTS (NY), for their substantial help on matters of content and style.

2 See E. Schleifer, "Current Trends of Liturgical Music in the Ashkenazi Synagogue," in: *The World of Music* 37/1, 1995:59-72, and S. Adler, Sacred Music in a Secular Age, in: *Sacred Sound and Social Change: liturgical music in Jewish and Christian experience*, L. A. Hoffman and J. R. Walton, eds., (Notre Dame : University of Notre Dame Press), 1992:289-299.

3 So far, very few studies have been done on the Israeli Ashkenazi synagogues. Eliyahu Schleifer gives an overall view of the modern developments in the Ashkenazi tradition at large, while briefly referring to Israeli circumstances. See his "Current trends," 1995; and idem, "Hamishim Sh'not Hazzanut B'Israel – Bameh Hitkadammu?" (Fifty years of cantorial music in Israel – what progress have we made?), in: *Duchan* 15, 2000:17-26. Raymond Goldstein gives a brief account of the current state of cantors and choirs in Israel. See his "Ashkenazi Liturgical Music in Israel Today: a Short Social History and Review," in: *Musical Performance* 1(2), 1997:51-63. Carmela Goldman's dissertation on the synagogues of the Religious Kibbutz is probably a first-of-its-kind study, employing ethnographic materials and methods for explaining major trends within the religious-Zionist society in Israel. See C. Goldman, *The Development of the Synagogue Musical Tradition at the Religious Kibbutzim*, Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 2003.

the study of Ashkenazi liturgical music generally by focusing on the music performed in Ashkenazi Israeli synagogues during the last decades.⁴

For the sake of our discussion, Ashkenazi musical tradition refers to the liturgical music of the Jews of western and eastern Europe, and in particular, of those Jews whose ancestors settled in the Rhinelands of southwestern Germany and northeastern France during the early Middle Ages, before many of them eventually emigrated eastwards and southwards and spread out as far as Lithuania and Russia, Hungary and Rumania.⁵ In time, the dispersed Jewish populace in those areas of the Continent formed two distinct cultural entities, one in the West and one in the East. While sharing the same basic liturgical tradition, these two entities eventually came to have their own distinct performance styles and customs. The performance style and practices of the western European Jews came to be known as “Minhag Ashkenaz,” while those of the eastern European Jews were called “Minhag Polin/Lita.”⁶

4 The Ashkenazi synagogues with which I am concerned in this investigation are strictly those of the Orthodox Zionist community (often referred to as the “national-religious camp”). While I do not ignore the presence of the other religious denominations within the Ashkenazi cultural milieu in Israel, I am particularly interested in this community because of its firm commitment to religious traditional practice, while at the same time partaking openly in the country’s social, political, and cultural life.

5 A. A. Urbach, “Ashkenaz,” in: *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem) 1972:cols. 719-722 (originally from the EH), and also E. Schleifer, “Jewish Liturgical Music from the Bible to Hasidism,” in: *Sacred Sound and Social Change: liturgical music in Jewish and Christian experience*, L. A. Hoffman and J. R. Walton, eds., (Notre Dame : University of Notre Dame Press), 1992:13-58; and idem, *Current Trends*, 1995.

6 On the distinction between these two main branches of the Ashkenazi liturgical-musical tradition see A. Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Music in its Historical Development* (3rd edition, Schocken Books, 1967 (1929)). Many scholarly works followed Idelsohn in using this two-fold paradigm when discussing different aspects of this tradition. Nevertheless, this general division into East and West is not intended as an exhaustive classification of the entire Ashkenazi musical tradition. Indeed, each of the two main branches may be divided into further sub-groups. See for example H. Avenary, “Aspects of Time and Environment in Traditional Jewish Music,” in: *Israel Studies in Musicology*, vol. IV, 1987:93-124.

It is noteworthy that some distinct cultural characterizations have evolved around the two main musical sub-traditions: The western branch, which is the earlier or more original of the two, is conventionally considered to be more orderly, restrained, and refined, whereas the eastern branch is regarded as more sentimental, spontaneous, and melismatic. Interestingly, these two characterizations coincide with the stereotypical distinctions between western Ashkenazi Jewry and the “Ostjüden.” See on this: Jack

Now, considering that most Ashkenazi Jews living in Israel today are themselves immigrants from Europe or the descendants of such immigrants, one would have expected to find in the new country the subsistence of the Ashkenazi musical tradition in its known European mold. Indeed, the general impression is that this tradition does persevere in contemporary Israel. And yet, when its various components are inspected closely, it appears that much is not exactly as it was during the last one-to-200 years before the War. In what follows, I will illustrate some of the manifestations of change in the Ashkenazi musical tradition since its relocation to Israel and indicate some of the social and ideological factors that led to them.

Changes and Innovations

The following illustrations of musical changes and innovations in the Ashkenazi liturgical tradition in Israel are all taken from one central, well established synagogue in Jerusalem.⁷ The members of this synagogue are almost all of Ashkenazi origin, either European immigrants or the descendants of such immigrants, the majority coming from the West, and it can be said that they all have strong Zionist inclinations. According to the synagogue's set of regulations on prayer matters (*Taqqanot*), the prayers are to be conducted in "the Ashkenazi *nusah* accepted in Jerusalem" [the writer's translation from the Hebrew, here as elsewhere]. The above mentioned *nusah* refers to the entire body of liturgical texts known as the Lithuanian rite, which is the most representative version of the eastern, non-Hasidic, Ashkenazi tradition.⁸ This textual *nusah* is based on that used by the Vilna Gaon (1720-1797) and his

Wertheimer, *Unwelcome Strangers: East European Jews in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press), 1987; and David Brenner, *Marketing Identities: The Invention of Jewish Ethnicity in Ost und West* (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press), 1998, mainly chap. 3.

7 Ohel-Nehama congregation, located in the Kiryat-Shmuel neighborhood.

8 In the context of Jewish liturgical music, the term *nusah* usually refers both to the version of the liturgical text used and to the musical and stylistic modes of performance of the liturgical text by a prayer leader during synagogue service. For a discussion of the different uses of the term see B. Tarsi, "Observations on Practices of Nusach in America," in: *Asian Music*, 33/2, 2002: mainly 175-179, and J. Frigyesi, "Orality as Religious Ideal – The Music of East-European Jewish Prayer," in: E. Schleifer and E. Seroussi, eds., *Yuval – Studies in Honour of Israel Adler (Yuval studied of the Jewish Music Research Centre, vol. VII, Jerusalem: Magnes Press) 2002: mainly 124-128. In the specific case of the regulation quoted above, the authors' intention was probably to designate the textual version required, but as we shall see later they also had the musical meaning in mind.*

disciples, and has been accepted in Jerusalem since the end of the 18th century, and thus it is also known as the Lithuanian-Jerusalem (Lita-Yerushalayim⁹) *nusah*. Although the term *nusah* in the above quoted statement denotes text, it is understood by the members of the synagogue that such a text is to be recited in accordance with a certain musical tradition, in our context, the eastern Ashkenazi tradition. Indeed, the musical rendition of the prayers in our synagogue is, by and large, that of the eastern European or Lithuanian-Jerusalem branch.

1. Prayer Styles and Tunes

Critical examination of the music performed in the synagogue reveals that its musical repertory is quite varied, including melodies and styles not of eastern European origin. Indeed, I have so far identified Hasidic, German, Hungarian, Spanish-Portuguese, and modern Israeli tunes, as well as works by such well known composers as Salomon Sulzer, Louis Lewandowsky, Shlomo Zalman Rivlin, Zalman Pollack, Zvi Talmon, and Shlomo Carlebach.¹⁰ The musical diversity characteristic to this synagogue is discernible not only within the scope of its entire yearly repertory, but also within the more limited scope of individual liturgical events. Thus, on a given Day of Atonement (*Yom HaKippurim*), for example, in our synagogue one may well hear tunes and styles of different origins, such as Lithuanian and other eastern European variants, Hasidic, German (Frankfurt), English, Alsatian, Dutch, and modern-Israeli (i.e., composed by Israeli cantors and musicians).

2. Biblical Cantillation

Just as the majority of the prayers in this synagogue are conducted in the eastern European style, so too, is the biblical cantillation. The western or German (“Yekkish”) biblical cantillation variant is seldom heard in this synagogue, and when it is, this is usually for the Haftarah. The Book of Esther,

9 This term was coined by Y. L. Ne’eman, in his *Nosah LaHazan* vols. 1 & 2 (Jerusalem: The Israel Institute for Sacred Music, 1963 & 1968).

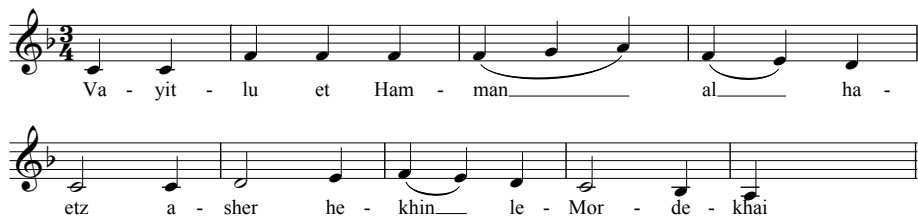
10 Salomon Sulzer (1809-1869) — composer and cantor in Vienna; Louis Lewandowsky (1821-1894) — composer and choirmaster in Berlin; Shlomo Zalman Rivlin (1884-1962) — cantor and cantorial teacher in Jerusalem; Zalman Pollack (1901-1985) — cantor and teacher in Jerusalem; Zvi Talmon (Monson) (1922-) — composer, teacher, arranger and choirmaster in Jerusalem); Shlomo Carlebach (1920-1994) — composer and performer of some liturgical pieces and many popular Jewish songs in modern popular Hasidic style.

read publicly twice on the festival of Purim (once in the evening and once the following morning), is the only text for which the western variant is heard either as much or even more than the eastern variant.¹¹ For many years now, the evening reading has been performed by the same person, whose cantillation of Esther is distinctly western European. Sometime during his career as reader, he introduced, for one of the book's verses, a tune that is different from that of the traditional tropes (i.e., the musical cantillation motifs), a tune of uniquely western Ashkenazi provenance.¹² We are referring here to a popular wedding tune from the Rhineland area, sung at the ending verse of chapter 7 (**Example 1**):¹³

11 Although the eastern and western variants are easily discernible, they are only slightly different from each other. In any case, in this synagogue they are employed independently by different readers and there is usually no mixture of the two variants by the same reader. See Amalia Kedem, *Contemporary Cantillation of the Book of Esther According to the Ashkenazi Custom in Israel* (MA thesis, Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem), 2001: chap. 2.

12 As compared to the general rule of Ashkenazi biblical cantillation, according to which a certain trope-tune is used for the entire text being read on a given occasion, the reading of the Book of Esther on the festival of Purim incorporates musical "detours" for several verses, in which the Esther trope-tune is replaced by other tunes. Borrowed from various sources, these tunes allude to hidden meanings in the text, in addition to their function as an interpretive tool for the reader, thus enriching the contents of the text and adding a festive, cheerful atmosphere to the event. On detours see A. W. Binder, *Biblical Chant* (NY: Philosophical Library) 1959. On the event and practices of the Ashkenazi cantillation of Esther in contemporary Israel, see Kedem, *Contemporary Cantillation*, 2001.

13 Of the two separate field recordings that I have of this person reading the Book of Esther, made over a decade from each other, the early one exhibits at this point the regular traditional trope-tune, while the later one already incorporates the musical "detour" (see previous note). The tune used here as a substitute for the regular tropes is employed in the western Ashkenazi tradition in different wedding related contexts: for the seven wedding benedictions in Holland, and for the *Huppah* procession, in Germany and in Alsace. The surprising connection of a wedding tune to Purim has generated several popular tales, exegetical pieces, and jokes relating to the two liturgical events. See H. Bloemendhal and J. Poolman van Beusekom, eds. *Amsterdams chazanoet: synagogale muziek van de Ashkenazische gemeente*, Buren: F. Knuf), 1990: end of vol. 2; F. Raphael, "Le Mariage Juif dans la Campagne Alsacienne dans la Deuxieme Moitié du XIX Siècle," in: *Studies in Marriage Customs*, Folklore Research Center Studies, IV (Jerusalem), 1974; Kedem, *Contemporary Cantillation*, 2001:124-5; and B. Hamburger, *Shorshei Minhag Ashkenaz*, vol. 4 (B'nei Brak: Machon Moreshet Ashkenaz), 2004:547-8.



Example 1.

When this tune was first introduced, some congregants who were familiar with it from the Old Country joined the reader in the singing of this verse.¹⁴ Eventually, other members of the congregation joined in, so that in time, the singing of this distinct western Ashkenazi tune by the congregation as a whole became an integral part of the synagogue's practice.

In the example of the Book of Esther we illustrated the presence of the western European branch in the synagogue's biblical cantillation repertory. But besides the separate coexistence of the two cantillation variants, there are also instances when elements of the two are intermixed. Take, for example, the two variants of the frequently occurring cantillation-trope *T'vir* (Example 2):



Example 2.

While the contours of these two variants are similar, the difference in their location within the modal framework (i.e., their position in relation to the musical scale used, to its inner hierarchy of tones, and to its characteristic motifs) is significant enough to be immediately and correctly identified by insiders. In other words, bearers of the tradition often have no difficulty in attributing each variant of the *t'vir* trope to its respective branch, and so, they

¹⁴ Whereas joining in with the reader during biblical cantillation is considered a deviation from the general Ashkenazi practice, it is not so in the cantillation of Esther, where – as I have shown elsewhere – deviation is part of the rule. See Kedem, *Contemporary Cantillation*, 2001.

are able to evaluate a given performance of the trope as being correct or incorrect. At the same time, the two variants of the *t'vir* trope are similar enough to be smoothly interchanged. And so, when a reader of German background inadvertently uses the eastern European variant of this trope, as occurs from time to time in our synagogue, his western (German) reading style becomes tinted with a slightly different modality.

3. Congregational Participation

Changes in the Ashkenazi musical tradition in Israel manifest themselves not only in the music itself but also in the modes of its performance. One of these changes concerns the roles of the congregation and cantor during the service. It occurs in our synagogue that particular musical pieces originally composed either for cantor and choir or for cantor solo are sung together by the congregation – a phenomenon generally unknown back in Europe. Such pieces are performed congregationally even when the text, and its musical setting, call for a recitative kind of singing. This innovation in mode of performance has had two distinct effects. One is the blurring of the boundary lines between the roles of cantor and congregation.¹⁵ The other is the simplification and standardization of the music itself, especially in pieces of improvisatory character.¹⁶ Two examples of this active form of participation by the congregation are the pieces by Louis Lewandowsky, *Uv'nucho Yomar*, for returning the Torah scroll to the Ark before the Sabbath Musaf) and *Adonai Malach*, Psalm 93, for *Kabbalat Shabbat*.¹⁷ The actual performance of these

15 By assuming also the cantor's parts, the congregation is in essence undermining the traditional status of the cantor as soloist and performer, a status that evolved conspicuously in 19th century central and western Europe. The increased active role of the worshipping public in the service is indeed consonant with the apparent general decline in the status of the cantor in the Ashkenazi community at large. See M. Slobin, *Chosen Voices*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), p. 195-196; E. Schleifer, *Current Trends*, 1995:65-66; and Goldstein, *Ashkenazi Liturgical Music*, 1997.

16 Some aspects of the processes of simplification and standardization occurring in this synagogue are similar to those occurring in Ashkenazi American synagogues. See Tarsi, "Observations," 2002; and idem, "Voices in the Sanctuary – Musical Practices of the American Synagogue," in: *Conservative Judaism*, 55/1, 2002:61-73.

17 The version of *Uw'-nucho Yomar* sung in this synagogue is no. 76 (p. 128-9) in vol. 1 of Lewandowski's *Todah W'Simrah* (Berlin: E. Bote & G. Bock), 1876. A slightly different version may be found in no. 51 in his earlier *Kol Rinnah U'T'fillah: ein- und zweistimmige Gesaenge fuer den israelitischen Gottesdienst* (Frankfurt a. M.: J. Kauffmann, 1882; 1st ed.: Berlin), 1871:38-39. *Adonai Malach* is no. 14 (p. 13) in *Kol Rinnah*, or no.

pieces by the congregation is quite impressive, considering their complexity, which includes some subtle modulations and jumps in intervals of sevenths and octaves.

It should be noted that not all cantorial pieces in this synagogue's repertory are sung together by the congregation. In other words, the inclination of the worshippers to congregational singing has not done away with the institution of cantor.¹⁸ From an aesthetic point of view, it is obvious that not every musical piece may or should be sung in unison by the worshippers. The specific cantorial pieces that are sung congregationally in our synagogue are, for the most part, those which were known already to many of the members back in their countries of origin. Their performance in this synagogue may be seen, then, as an attempt to keep alive that particular musical tradition within the confines of Israeli reality.¹⁹

Factors of Change

We saw above that one of the manifestations of change in the Ashkenazi musical tradition as carried out in Israel is the striking diversity in tunes and styles evident in the local repertory. In the case of our synagogue, various factors account for this diversity. The first is connected to the varied backgrounds of the prayer leaders who have served in it throughout the years. Although one may find in this community prayer leaders and cantors who grew up with either of the two main branches of the Ashkenazi tradition, the most active and conspicuous among them are those of western European origin: from Germany, Holland, France, Switzerland, and England. The latter prayer leaders, who are well-versed in their own Old Country tradition, also learned the common eastern European *nusah*, which facilitated their participation in the synagogue.²⁰ The majority of the western European styles and tunes employed today in this synagogue, like those of Lewandowsky, were introduced by these prayer leaders.

25 (p. 62-63) in *Todah W'Simrah*, vol. 1.

18 One does indeed hear in this synagogue sections of the liturgy performed in solo by the cantor or prayer leader, while the congregation remains silent.

19 For some observations on congregational singing in Israel, see Yosef Zucker, "A Cross-section of Congregational Singing in One Israeli City," in: *Journal of Synagogue Music*, Fall 2005, mainly p. 188.

20 In interviews held with these prayer leaders I was informed that their learning of the eastern *nusah* took place either actively, from teachers or books, or passively, through involvement in Zionist youth movements or simply from being exposed to the local tradition while living in Israel.

As to the adoption of modern Jewish tunes and Israeli liturgical compositions, like those of Rivlin and Talmon, two explanations may be adduced. The first explanation is general and underscores the universality of this development. As often happens, relocated cultural groups absorb features and elements from their new surroundings. These features and elements are then interwoven into the groups' own practices, thus creating new and distinct forms of their traditions. Our congregation's varied repertory, then, simply reflects the influence of local mores and tastes.²¹ The second explanation concerns the conscious aspirations of the congregation to impart to their synagogue a modern Israeli identity. Despite the fact that the members come from a variety of backgrounds, most of them can be said to possess strong Jewish and Zionist roots. Indeed, the choice of the Lita-Yerushalayim *nusah* was ideologically motivated. The decision to use the predominant liturgical text followed in the Ashkenazi Zionist community stems from this congregation's desire to be part of that group. The members' Zionist outlook is noted explicitly in the synagogue's prayer regulations: "The prayers will be conducted according to the Ashkenazi *nusah* accepted in Jerusalem... while giving expression to the religious significance of the revival of the Jewish People in their sovereign country." It was this outlook which motivated the inclusion of special liturgical pieces, like the Prayer for the State and its Leaders (*T'fillah Li'Shlom Ham'dinah*), the Prayer for the IDF soldiers (*T'fillah l'-Hayalei Tsahal*), and various other additions to the yearly liturgy which were innovated in the Zionist camp.²² Needless to say, all these represent a certain departure from

21 The diversity in backgrounds apparent in this synagogue reflects the general social situation in Israel in which immigrants from specific communities were dispersed throughout the country and eventually joined or formed new communities. This situation goes hand in hand with the general disintegration of the traditional framework of European communities caused in part by the emigration of members from those communities. Appreciation of the processes through which new communities are formed in Israel is crucial for understanding the ways in which immigrant musical traditions are transplanted there. Drawing upon Jehoash Hirshberg's article, "In Search of a Model for Transplanted Music in Migrant Communities" (*Musicology Australia* 15, 1992), one could say of our synagogue that the interaction in it between the musical elements of various origins has resulted in a "synthesis" of traditions.

22 The prayers for the State and for the soldiers are part of the regular Sabbath and Festival services. Among the additional liturgical pieces one should mention the recitation of the memorial service (*Yizkor*) on the Day of Atonement for members of the congregation who died in combat, and the festive services commemorating Israel's Independence Day and "Jerusalem Day" (*Yom Yerushalayim*), marking the reunification of Jerusalem during the Six-day War in 1967.

the old European synagogue practices. Thus it is easy to see how the desire to partake in the local national culture led to this congregation's openness to well-known local pieces.

Another factor which explains the diversified character of our synagogue's repertory is the fancy of the members for congregational singing. This phenomenon, which we will discuss below, accounts for the embracing of various Israeli folk and neo-Hasidic hits.

It would appear that all the above deviations from the traditional eastern-European musical *nusah* are in contradiction to the spirit of the regulations. As stated, the election of a certain textual rite – in this case, Lita-Yerushalayim – does imply the use of a certain musical tradition.²³ However, the regulations do not explicitly define the musical parameters to be followed in the prayers. Although it is clear that the election of a specific textual rite conforms with the ideal of uniformity in synagogue practice, technically, the ambiguity on the musical issue allows for the different prayer leaders to display their own musical tastes, be they eastern, western, Israeli, or any combination of these.

The ambiguity regarding the music to be used during the prayers holds also for biblical cantillation. The use of the western European tropes in a synagogue where the ordinary reading follows the eastern cantillation style reflects a certain degree of flexibility and consideration for those congregants of western background. A case in point is the regular evening reading of the Book of Esther. For one, this reading is executed in the western style. But of greater interest is the fact that the reader felt comfortable enough to deviate from the standard western tropes and introduce the detour tune mentioned above. This tune, unique to certain western Ashkenazi communities, was chosen by him out of his desire to please those congregants of western background to whom this tune is dear.

The case of the *t'vir* trope, in which a western reader inadvertently slips into the eastern variant of the trope, may be ascribed to that reader's long and constant exposure to the dominant eastern cantillation style. This example illustrates clearly how the interaction of different musical styles within the same setting may result in one style being influenced by the other.

As mentioned above, changes in the Ashkenazi musical tradition in Israel are manifest also in the modes in which the music is performed. The example we discussed was that of congregational singing at musical compositions originally composed either for cantor and choir or for cantor solo. In our synagogue, several factors account for this phenomenon and its distinct

23 See opening paragraph of **Changes and Innovations** subsection, above.

consequences. The first factor concerns the lack of a formal choir, a reality common to most synagogues in Israel.²⁴ Having no choir, it is easy to understand how the congregation fills in that part. In fact, prayer leaders in our synagogue who initiate a piece for cantor and choir expect the congregation to assume the choir's role. That the congregation joins in also during parts meant exclusively for the cantor stems from the fact that they are not a choir in the formal sense of the term, i.e., they lack the training of a formal choir. This stands out particularly in those musical contexts in which the parts for the cantor and the choir are in close proximity to each other. In Lewandowsky's *Uw'-nucho Yomar*, for example, a piece containing a sequence of alternating parts for cantor and choir, it may not be always clear to the congregants what parts were designated for them. In the example of *Adonai Malach*, a piece intended as a recitative for solo cantor, the congregation's singing seems to be prompted by the fact that this piece follows immediately in the service after another singing favorite of the congregation, the *Tzaddik Katamar*, end of Psalm 92).²⁵ Consequently, instead of concluding their singing at the end of the latter piece and thereby adhering to their "choir" role, they tend to join in with the cantor for his solo part – the result being that the preferred and expected mode of performance of a given piece is extended unto the neighboring one.²⁶

The second factor behind this synagogue's vocal congregational participation during pieces not meant for congregational singing is the keen desire of many of its members for communal singing. This desire, which reflects local tastes and influences, finds its origins in the practices of Jewish Zion-

24 See Goldstein, "Ashkenazi Liturgical Music," 1997.

25 *Tzaddik Katamar* is the ending of the piece titled *Tow LHodoss* (beginning of psalm 92) — *Kol Rinnah*, end of no. 13 (p. 13); *Todah W'Simrah*, end of no. 21, p. 50-51. Psalms 92 and 93, being part of the service's text, are recited by all communities. The congregational singing of this sequence of Lewandowsky's settings — *Tzaddik Katamar* and *Adonai Malach* — is randomly found in Ashkenazi Israeli synagogues. The singing of *Tzaddik Katamar* alone in Lewandowsky's version is apparently a most common, wide-spread practice in the US. See G. Goldberg, "Neglected Sources for the Historical Study of Synagogue Music: The Prefaces to Louis Lewandowski's *Kol Rinnah u'T'fillah* and *Todah W'simrah* — Annotated Translations," in: *Musica Judaica*, 11/1, 1989-90: mainly p. 34.

26 By changing the norm of performance of this section of the prayer, the congregation is also changing its modal framework, a phenomenon discussed by B. Tarsi in "Congregational Singing as a Norm of Performance within the Modal Framework of Ashkenazi Liturgical Music," *JSM* 30/1, 2005, pp. 63-95.

ist youth movements both in Israel and abroad.²⁷ As a matter of fact, group singing is still one of the hallmarks of these ideological movements. The fact that many of the members of our congregation are alumni of movements like B'nei Akiva and the Religious Scouts is thus significant.²⁸ Indeed, the desire for congregational singing finds expression early on in the synagogue's prayer regulations. These regulations, formulated in the 1960s by the founders and first members, have it that "the prayer leader should strive to have the congregation join in the singing."

Conclusion

As stated in the Introduction, the Ashkenazi liturgo-musical tradition has undergone significant changes during the last decades. In this article it has been my aim to discuss some of the changes specific to this tradition since its relocation to Israel, by presenting manifestations of change taken from one particular Israeli synagogue. Our discussion shows that changes in the tradition have transpired both in the music (e.g., tunes and styles) and in the manner of its performance (whether by cantor or congregation), and that they cover all areas of the liturgy, from prayer to biblical cantillation.²⁹ Among the main factors behind changes in the tradition we noted the diverse backgrounds of the congregation's members and in particular, the reciprocal influence of its prayer leaders, readers, and cantors on each other. Furthermore, we noted the impact that Israel's modern cultural milieu has had on the music of this synagogue, as well as the role played by the congregation's ideological aspirations to partake in this milieu and assimilate its particular tastes and trends.

²⁷ Group singing is up to this day a widespread pastime in modern Israel, as can be learned from the fact that it serves as leisure activity or entertainment in both private and public events. Such events are even organized and recorded or filmed, to be later broadcast in the electronic media.

²⁸ See E. Schleifer, *Hamishim*, 2000; and, idem, " 'Shalom Aleikhem: HaLaḥan Ha-mekubal Veba-Malḥin Ha-nishkakh,' " in: *Duchan 16 – Avigdor Herzog Book* (Jerusalem), 2006: mainly pp. 316-317. Elsewhere (Current Trends, 1995:66), he mentions this demand for singing as part of a more general trend prevalent both in Israel and in the US after World War II and accounted for by social changes brought about by modernity.

²⁹ The fact that the changes were found among members who have emigrated from Europe, thus embodying the relocation of the tradition, attests to the rapid pace of change that this tradition has undergone so far in Israel.

True, the study of a single synagogue, however representative it may be, is insufficient for attaining a full appreciation of the subject of Ashkenazi liturgical music in Israel today. For this research, it is indispensable to carry out comparisons with other synagogues in the country. And yet, the picture afforded by one synagogue alone is enough to give us a sense of the new directions in which this tradition is developing in Israel.³⁰

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30 Borrowing the concept of “diversity within unity”, I would like to suggest that in synagogues such as this one, in which the members actively strive to create a distinct, unified, and integrated community, diversity itself generates tolerance for the musical variety offered by the different prayer leaders, thus making integration possible. Congregations that function in this manner are bound to develop their own distinct and new musical traditions. On “diversity within unity”, see *Asian Music* 17(2), 1986 (a special issue, edited by Mark Slobin and Philip V. Bohlman, and titled “Music in the Ethnic Communities of Israel”). For an acute example of how new integrated traditions may emerge see J. Summit, “‘I’m a Yankee Doodle Dandy’: Identity and Melody at an American *Simhat Torah* Celebration,” in: *Ethnomusicology* 37/1, 1993:41-62.

Sephardic Influences on the Ashkenazi Liturgy in London

by Naomi Cohn Zentner

Introduction

In this paper I intend to explain how and why Sephardic melodies were adopted into the liturgy of the Ashkenazi Jews in London during the early twentieth century. As part of this account I will discuss synagogue reforms, the creation of the United Synagogue's choral hymnal and the part of Francis Lyon Cohen in the inclusion of Sephardic melodies in the Ashkenazi prayers. Finally, I will present a transcription of current day Ashkenazi usage of the Sephardic tune *Az Yashir Moshe* as a case study for usage of these Sephardic melodies in Ashkenazi Orthodox synagogues in London of 2004.¹

I will begin by describing the process of synagogue reforms taking place within Orthodox synagogues during the second half of the 19th century in London resulting in the inclusion of several Sephardic melodies into the *Handbook of Synagogue Music*, the United Synagogue choral compilation of the complete liturgy of English Ashkenazi Orthodox Jews.²

Synagogue Reforms

By the second half of the nineteenth century, major changes had been implemented in the rituals of Orthodox synagogues in London. Sermons were given in English, prayer was partially abridged, and rabbis and cantors were dressed in canonicals greatly resembling Anglican ministers of that time.³ To the mass of primarily religious Eastern-European Jews who began arriving in waves in England during the 1880s, this phenomenon must have been quite disturbing. Were these the same Jews who had emigrated from European communities only a few generations ago? What influences could have possibly provoked a synagogue manner so foreign to the traditional Ashkenazi Judaism they had originated from?

1. London was chosen to serve as a case-study for this thesis because of the resources available; however, Sephardic musical influence is evident in other parts of England as well.

2. Francis L. Cohen and David M. Davis, eds., *The Voice of Prayer and Praise: A Handbook for Congregational Singing* (London: Greenberg and Co., 1899).

3. Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England 1714-1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society 1714-1830* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 160-163.

Most of the Jews residing in England in 1880 lived an Anglicized life. They maintained English values, enjoyed equal rights, and lacked in the realm of Jewish learning. As immigrants they had quickly internalized the values of English life and remodeled their own lives and the life of their community based on these newly acquired values. They changed their dress, diet and education. External characteristics such as the long beard, Eastern European dress and Yiddish language were abandoned relatively quickly, while central elements such as synagogue worship and Jewish education were retained but modified. Already in the 1820s, the synagogue service changed gradually, so that Jewish religious ritual would be compatible with the prevailing gentile practice. For example, only men in top hats were allowed the honorable *Aliyah LaTorah*; clergymen, then called “ministers,” wore clerical robes; and decorum was deemed of the utmost importance.

Also reformed were the musical aspects of both Ashkenazi and Sephardic synagogue ritual. Choirs were introduced to both communities in the late 1830s and the 1840s, and gained increasingly in popularity. By the 1880s they were well established in synagogues, and appeared as a weekly feature in Shabbat and Festival services. The music sung by Ashkenazi choirs tended to be too complex for the community to join in the singing; in fact, it was sometimes too challenging for even trained choristers to perform correctly. The intricate music used in the services excluded the lay members of the congregation from participating, to the extent that the community in some synagogues served only as an audience instead of as participants.⁴ This situation gave rise to the need for a synagogue hymn book, comprising melodies for the synagogue services for Shabbat and Festivals that facilitated congregational participation and choral musical performance.

The Handbook of Synagogue Music

In 1889, the first version of the United Synagogue’s choral hymnal *A Handbook of Synagogue Music: The Voice of Prayer and Praise* (henceforth “Handbook”)

4. In a sermon given in 1884, Simeon Singer, the New West End Synagogue minister, bemoaned the passive role of the congregation, with the service divided between the choir and reader. “[decorum had gone too far, for] the reader and the choir...divide between them the whole service, the congregation remaining for the most part passive, listening to the proceedings...In the days before choirs had become a recognizable auxiliary of the synagogue service the whole congregation joined audibly in the appropriate responses.” Quoted in Steven Sharot, “Religious Change in Native Orthodoxy in London 1870-1914: The Synagogue Service,” *The Jewish Journal of Sociology* 15, no. 1(1973): 70.

was published, with a revised version printed some ten years later.⁵ One of the reasons for the *Handbook's* compilation was an attempt to standardize the music used in the United Synagogue's constituent congregations and thus to create a unified liturgy.

The *Handbook* was intended to be the hymnbook for Ashkenazi Anglo Jewry, used by congregants in conjunction with the *Siddur*. The *Handbook*—which comprised all the melodies sung in synagogue during the Jewish year—was invaluable to cantors, choirMaster's and choristers. Its immense popularity, as evidenced by the release of a revised edition in 1899 and five subsequent editions over the course of the next 65 years, testifies to its musical significance in the British Jewish community.⁶

In an attempt to improve the choristers' incorrect pronunciation and musical incompetence, the soprano and alto parts in the *Handbook* (sung primarily by children) were notated in the tonic sol-fa, taught in many elementary schools, as well as in staff notation. In addition, complex harmonies were rearranged and intricate melodies simplified so that choirboys who were not trained musicians would be able to sing elaborate choral compositions.

While it is difficult to determine how the editors chose musical material for the *Handbook*, it is simpler to ascertain the volume's musical sources. The *Handbook* included mostly preexisting choral pieces with a few newly composed works and included pieces by non-English composers such as Solomon Sulzer, Louis Lewandowski and Samuel Naumbourg; and Anglo-Jewish composers Julius Mombach, Charles Salaman and others. Also used were preexisting Anglo-Jewish musical compilations, such as *The Music Used in the service of the West London Synagogue of British Jews*, edited by Charles Verrinder for the Reform synagogue.

I chose to focus on fifteen melodies of Sephardic origin which appear in the *Handbook of Synagogue Music*. My research and comparison reveal that nearly all were taken from *The Ancient Melodies of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews*, edited by David Aharon de Sola and arranged by Emanuel Aguilar in 1857.⁷ *The Ancient Melodies* was the earliest print source for the main body of traditional Spanish and Portuguese melodies. Its purpose was

5. The United Synagogue, formed in 1870, was an organization uniting the Ashkenazi Orthodox Synagogues in London under the Chief Rabbi.

6. I chose to focus on the second more widely received second edition published in 1899 edited by David M. Davis and Francis Lyon Cohen.

7. Emanuel Abraham Aguilar and David Aaron de Sola, eds., *The Ancient Melodies of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews* (London: Wessel and Co., 1857)

to preserve and lay out the historical research of the Spanish and Portuguese oral traditions.

Sephardic Melodies in the Ashkenazi Handbook

The Sephardic melodies included in the *Handbook* are designated for different parts of the year-long prayer cycle. They include Sephardic melodies to the prayers of Sabbath and the High Holidays as well as for Shloshet HaRegalim. Among them are: Adon Olam, melodies for Hallel, Lekha Dodi, El Nora Alilah, En Kelohenu, Yigdal, and Az Yashir Moshe/Shirat HaYam which will be discussed further. Not all melodies retained their Sephardic function when relocated into the *Handbook*. For example: melody number 25 is *Hallel for Shabbat* in the Sephardic *Ancient Melodies*, but when transferred to the *Handbook* the editors chose to include it in the liturgy of Rosh HaShanah as “BeSefer Hayyim.”

Why did the editors of the *Handbook*, compiled for the usage of Ashkenazi congregations, decide to include melodies that had never been part of the traditional Ashkenazi repertoire? The answer to that question is complex; reasons seem to range from the musical features of the pieces to the personalities involved in producing the *Handbook*.

In 1892, Herman Adler, the Chief Rabbi of the Orthodox Ashkenazi communities in London, wrote a pamphlet urging choirMaster’s under his auspices to utilize melodies of simple contour to encourage congregational participation.

I entreat the worshippers not to imagine that Divine Service can be performed vicariously for them but to offer up the prayers with concentrated attention and fervor, and to join with heartiness in the responses, psalms and hymns. In order to enable *the congregants to do this*, I would ask the choirMaster’s to use the *simplest harmonies* and to eschew all melodies of an ornate and florid character.⁸

Since Sephardic melodies were usually sung by the entire congregation they had developed along lines especially suited to that form of communal participation. Many characteristics rendered Sephardic melodies appropriate for inclusion in the *Handbook*: They sounded different from Ashkenazi tunes but enjoyed unquestioned Traditional status as they were already in use by the Orthodox Spanish and Portuguese community. Moreover, they were simple and repetitive with small melodic ranges, making it easy for congregants to sing along. The harmony used in Sephardic choral pieces had fewer modula-

8. Herman Adler, *The Ritual: The Reply of the Chief Rabbi* (London: Wertheimer, Lea and Co., 1890).[My italics]

tions than most pieces in the Ashkenazi repertoire, thus young boys could more readily learn to sing them.

Francis Lyon Cohen

Francis L. Cohen, coeditor of the *Handbook*, was an Ashkenazi rabbi and musicologist interested in the sources and ages of Jewish melodies. He was particularly engrossed by what he perceived to be ancient melodies. It is interesting to note the large percentage of Sephardic melodies about which he chose to write articles, as musical editor of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1901-1905). He categorizes them as older than Ashkenazi melodies, stemming from antique sources. Some of the Sephardic melodies that eventually appeared in the *Handbook* were featured earlier in his academic lecture on the evolution of Jewish music through history, the *Rise and Development of Synagogue Music*.⁹ It is possible that while researching that talk he encountered interesting musical examples which he subsequently included in the *Handbook's* first edition published in 1889. Cohen himself found Sephardic melodies to be significant historical milestones in the development of Synagogue music. His belief that Sephardic melodies are eminently suitable for congregational singing is conveyed in his article "Adonoi Melech" in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*:

In the Sephardic Liturgy...the melodies are intended more for congregational singing than for the cantor's elaboration...*The Sephardim have more traditional strains suited for rendering by a congregational unison*, and as a result these melodies have varied but little in local tradition. In the Ashkenazi liturgy, however, the cantor was from ancient times, not so much the leader of the congregational song as the practiced vocalist who musically interpreted the text to the listening congregation.¹⁰

Another aspect of Sephardic influence is evident in the prayer book of *The West London Synagogue of British Jews*, a Reform synagogue established in 1840. The prayer book adopted Sephardic pronunciation and other Sephardic customs, including a few melodies originating in the Spanish and Portuguese synagogue. The Orthodox community could not avoid being influenced by these synagogue reforms, both in England and abroad.¹¹ Tellingly, the Sep-

9. Cohen, Francis L. "The Rise and Development of Synagogue Music." In *Papers read at the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition, Royal Albert Hall*. London: n.p., 1887.

10. *Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Adonoi Melech." [The emphasis is mine]

11. Early Reform communities tended to incorporate Sephardic melodies and employ Sephardic pronunciation. Edwin Seroussi has traced Sephardic influences on Reform musical practices in Hamburg, Germany. Edwin Seroussi, *Spanish Portuguese Synagogue Music in Nineteenth-Century Reform Sources from Hamburg: Ancient Tradition*

hardic melodies in the English Reform repertory appeared later in the English Orthodox *Handbook*.

Although the *Handbook* was very popular among choristers and cantors it did not fulfill its primary purpose: to be used by worshipers together with the *Siddur*. We lack documentation regarding the actual acceptance of the Sephardic melodies into the repertory of Ashkenazi synagogues and whether they were actually sung after the *Handbook* was published during the 20th century. What is easier to ascertain is whether current day Ashkenazi practice in England includes Sephardic melodies in the synagogue.

My research, for which I interviewed English Ashkenazi cantors and lay members in an attempt to locate remnants of the Sephardic presence, reveals that even today Sephardic melodies are sung in most Ashkenazi synagogues in London. The two most popular Sephardic melodies are *Adon Olam*, composed by David Aharon De Sola, cantor at the Spanish and Portuguese synagogue and editor of the Sephardic compilation *The Ancient Melodies* and *Az Yashir Moshe/Shirat Hayam*.

Az Yashir Moshe

Az Yashir Moshe, or *Bendigamos* as it is termed by Italian Jews, is one of the most widespread Sephardic tunes, sung in almost all of the Sephardic Diaspora. The use of the melody *Az Yashir* in Ashkenazi liturgy is one of the most notable phenomena in the history of the inclusion of Sephardic music in Ashkenazi practice. *Az Yashir* was and still is sung by Spanish and Portuguese communities every Shabbat as part of the *Zemiroth* (Ashkenazi: *Pesukei DeZimra*) of the *Shaharit* morning service.¹² It is positioned in the *Handbook* as part of the regular Shabbat morning service, which was its setting in the Sephardic prayers in the 1880s when Cohen might have heard it sung there.

Today, Ashkenazi Jews in England sing it only twice annually—on *Shabbat Shirah*, the Shabbat which features the reading of the weekly Torah portion of the splitting of the Red Sea and the song of praise, *Az Yashir Moshe* — and on the seventh day of Passover (*Sh'vi'i shel Pesah*) when the same portion is read. They do not sing it in its Sephardic context, as a prayer of praise within the *Zemiroth* section, but as the melody for the Torah reading.

in the Dawn of Modernity (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996).

12. This custom is practiced in London, Amsterdam, New York, and other remnants of the Western Spanish and Portuguese Diaspora.

The reason for this variation in function might be due to the differences between Ashkenazi and Sephardic ways of performing the *Zemiroth* section. The Sephardic congregation tends to sing much more of the prayers than the Ashkenazi congregation. At this point in the Sephardic service, the choir is often present and leads the community in singing *Az Yashir*. However, since Ashkenazim perform this section of the liturgy in a quiet recitation, and choral singing appears only at a later stage in the prayers, *Az Yashir* is not sung aloud. An attempt to incorporate the Sephardic melody of *Az Yashir* into Ashkenazi prayers at that juncture and to have it sung by the congregation would not have been successful. Thus, the only possible opportunity for singing this melody would be at a later stage in the prayer service, such as used for the *Az Yashir* portion in the Torah reading, which occurs twice a year.

On these occasions during the traditional Shabbat cantillation of the Torah, Ashkenazi Jews across the globe sing a typical Ashkenazi trope variation especially designated for *Az Yashir Moshe*. In England, however, this is not the case. English Ashkenazim have adopted the Sephardic melody of *Az Yashir Moshe* as their special cantillation of the Torah portion of *Shirat Hayam*. This melodic adoption is unprecedented, since there is no other circumstance in which a melody is used for the cantillation of a Torah portion during the Jewish annual cycle within Ashkenazi traditions. Even more incredible is the fact that the Sephardim themselves do not sing this melody for the Torah portion of *Az Yashir Moshe* on *Shabbat Shirah*. Rather, they sing it during the Shabbat *Shaharit* service as on any other week and add a special section of singing in honor of *Shabbat Shirah*.

Scores, testimonies and recordings reflect different methods of performance for this melody among the English Ashkenazi synagogues on *Shabbath Shirah* and *Shv'v'i shel Pesah*. One popular possibility is singing the Sephardic melody only to those verses where the name of G-d is mentioned in *Az Yashir*. In the transcription of the Sephardic version of *Az Yashir Moshe* as recorded by Halfon Bennarosh, *hazzan* of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue Bevis Marks in London (**Example 1**).¹³, the clear beat and Sephardic pronunciation are evident.

l

Az ya-shir-mo - she u - v' - nei yis-ra - eil et ha-shi - rah ha - zot l' A - do

13. London Sephardic Liturgical Music Series 47101-2, National Sound Archives, Jerusalem, 1987.

6
nai va - yo - m'ru lei - mor, A - shi - rah l'A - do - nai ki ga - oh ga - ah

13
sus v' ro - kh' - vo ra - mah va - yam. O - zi v' - zim - rat yah vay - hi

19
li li - shu - ah, zeh e - li v' - an - vei - hu e - lo hei a - vi va - a - ro - m' -

24
men - hu. A - do - nai ish mil ha - mah, A - do - nai sh' - mo. Mar - k' - vot par - oh v' - hei -

30
lo ya - rah va - yam, u - miv - har sha - di - shav tu - b' - u b' - yam suf..

Example 1. *Transcription of Halphon Bennarosh's chant for Az Yashir (London Sephardic Liturgical Music Series, 47101-2, National Sound Archives, Jerusalem, 1987).*

This rendition can be compared to a transcription of a recording I made in London in 2004 of an Ashkenazi rendition of *Oz Yoshir*, by Reverend Michael Binstock, *hazzan* at the Egerton Road Synagogue (**Example 2.**). The alternation between verses sung in the regular cantillation chant and those sung in the Sephardic chant is noted. An “A” denotes the traditional Ashkenazi Torah cantillation and “B” denotes the verses with God’s name, in which the Sephardic melody is employed.¹⁴

1 **A**
Oz yo - shir Mo - she u - v' - nei yis - ro - eil

2
es ha - shi - roh ha zois la - A - do - noi va yom - ru lei mor

3 **B**
O - shi - roh l'A - do - noi ki go - oi go - oh, *rit.* sus v' - roi kh' - voi

14. I chose to transcribe the piece without division into measures since the piece is sung without a regular beat; instead, the lines are numbered.

4Tempo I

6 ro - moh va - yom. O - zi v'-zim-ros Yoh vay - hi li li - shu - oh,

7 zeh__ ei - li ve - an - vei - hu e - lo - hei o - vi va - a - ro - me - men - hu.

8 A - doi - noi ish mil - ho - moh, A - doi - noi She - moi.

9 Mar - ke - vois par - oi ve - hei - lo yo - roh va - yom ... (regular cantillation continues)

10 Ye min - kho, A - doi noi, neh - do - ri va - khoi - ah, ye - min - kho A - doi noi tir - ats oi - yeiv ...

11 U - ve - roiv ge - oi - ne - kho ta - ha - rois ko - me - kho ... (regular cantillation continues)

12 Mi kho - moi - kho bo - ei - lim, A - doi - noi, Mi ko - moi - kho neh - dor ba - koi - desh

noi - roh se - hi - lois *rit.* oi - sei fe - leh.

Example 2. Reverend Michael Binstock: *Oz Yoshir (Song at the Sea)*;

A – Traditional Torah cantillation; **B** – Sephardi melody of *Az Yashir* (transcription of rendition during an interview by the author; London, England, February 3rd, 2004).

While Example 1. shows the melody of *Az Yashir* sung by Sephardim with a very clear beat, the Ashkenazi rendition in Example 2. lacks any feeling of a clear beat. The free-flowing rhythm to which the Sephardic melody is sung in the Ashkenazi version appears to be a result of its appearance within the Ashkenazi Torah cantillation which is always sung without regular meter. Hence the Sephardic melody is sung with characteristic Ashkenazi *Ritardando* in certain places as well as Ashkenazi pronunciation. Ashkenazi and Sephardic choirs would likewise perform this piece in completely different ways. The Sephardic choir functions as an accompaniment to the congregation's singing while the Ashkenazi choir performs this piece for a listening congregation.

The verses of *Shirat Hayam* sung worldwide by Ashkenazim to the special *Shirah* trope are the same ones sung by the English Ashkenazim to the Sephardic melody. They are: Exodus 15:1, 2, 3, 6, 11, 16 and 18. This implies that English Jews adopted a Sephardic melody for their cantillation of “*Shirat Hayam*” but used this melody according to an ancient Ashkenazi custom. Thus, the new practice reflects a fusion of two traditions into a new hybrid custom.

Another manner of using the Sephardic melody within the Ashkenazi Torah reading is singing the entire *Az Yashir* to the Sephardic melody, not only the verses including God’s name. The use of a choir for this portion of the prayers was once popular, since the Sephardic melody had been harmonized for use in the Sephardic synagogue with a choir. Michael Binstock recalled that the Torah reader customarily sang the Sephardic melody — joined by the choir in the melody’s refrain. In another synagogue, the congregation customarily sang every verse before the reader— reversing the traditional sequence of congregational singing.

According to *halakhah* (Jewish law; *Hayyei Adam*: 31, 5), the reader should perform the cantillation of the Torah portion by himself. Modern-day Orthodox practice is strict with regard to this law. As a result, in the last twenty years participation of the choir or the congregation in *Az Yashir* gradually diminished, and has all but disappeared. Some of the cantors interviewed mentioned that they themselves had discontinued this custom because it contradicted *halakhah*.

Singing the Sephardic melody of *Az Yashir* during the Torah reading on *Shabbat Shirah* has spread beyond the United Synagogue and has become an “English” custom. This came up in an interview I conducted with Hazzan Pesach Segal, cantor at the Hendon Adas Yisroel Synagogue, established in 1926 and belonging to the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations. Hazzan Segal recalled that a Torah reader introduced the Sephardic melody of *Az Yashir* to the synagogue during the 1980s, and the custom was subsequently adopted. So much so that on one occasion when the Sephardic melody was not sung to the Torah portion of *Az Yashir* “people were upset,” since it had become a synagogue tradition.¹⁵

My interview with Hazzan Nathan Gluck—son of the hazzan at the Great Synagogue in Sydney, Australia and today cantor at the *Munks* Synagogue in London—indicates that *Az Yashir* was sung in the Sephardic function as part of *Shaharit* for Shabbat every week until twenty years ago (a custom not

15. Pesach Segal, interview by the Author, London, England, February 3rd, 2004.

practiced elsewhere in Australia)¹⁶. I believe that this practice was introduced by Francis Lyon Cohen, rabbi of the Great Synagogue in Sydney between 1905 and 1934. It reflects his continuing attempt to renew the ancient Sephardic custom.

Conclusion

Sephardic melodies seemed to answer the need for singable congregational material at the end of the 19th century when they were incorporated within the London *Handbook of Synagogue Music* by editors Francis Lyon Cohen and David M. Davis. This attempt to introduce Sephardic melodies into the corpus of Ashkenazi synagogue music was not altogether successful; today only two of the fifteen melodies which were included in the volume are still sung popularly in Ashkenazi synagogues: *Az Yashir Moshe* and *Adon Olam*.

My research has led me to believe that Sephardic influences on Ashkenazi practices in England range beyond synagogue melodies to other areas and could be subject to an interdisciplinary study encompassing history, language and architecture. For example, all United Synagogue congregations have seating arrangements with congregants facing the center, which is the Sephardic custom, instead of facing the front as is the traditional Ashkenazi arrangement outside of England.

Finally, while conducting this research I asked cantors and musicologists what they thought had drawn Francis Lyon Cohen to these Sephardic melodies and motivated his attempt to incorporate them into Ashkenazi practice. They generally replied, "Maybe he just liked them." Cohen's writings and practice in leading prayer imply that this answer might not be so far from the truth.

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16. Nathan Gluck, interview by the Author, London, England, February 4th, 2004.

Point/Counterpoint:

1) Until the Final Note

by Nira Rouso

How is it, that of all the hobbies she might have chosen, Nira Rouso picked the serious endeavor of becoming a chorister? And despite everything—why does she enjoy it so much? For the Purity of Song.

Shortly after joining The Tel Aviv Chamber Choir I was surprised to find myself totally abandoned. Mind you, it wasn't the first insult that I'd suffered in my life. But it was the first time that I experienced, in the midst of a rehearsal, the cool and bitter taste of rejection on grounds of mental deficiency.

The irony was that I had been warmly accepted; The Tel-Aviv Chamber Choir is famous for close interpersonal ties among its members. Even our rather brusque director Michael Shani had reacted with tolerant understanding when I struggled through the lightning-like Fugue section of the Cherubini *Requiem*. But now a former singer, Rena, rejoined the group, and in a split-second the women around me disappeared, only to reposition themselves next to her. It happened quietly, without fuss. Rena happened to be an excellent sight-reader, and in a choir you always want to stand alongside someone who's sure of every note.

"Great," I said to myself, "you finally managed to find a hobby that points out your learning deficiencies! Wouldn't it have been better to leave your singing talent in the realm of obscure myth? Why do you suppose humans invented hobbies, if not to escape the dullness of their routine for a little while, to transport themselves to a higher and brighter level full of enchantment? This particular pastime, with its tremendous investment of energy, is self-defeating, and debilitating to boot."

When, for example, would it occur to anyone reading this article to drag themselves—after a full day's work—to Kiryat Gat, to undress and then suit up in a room with forty other men and women, or even to look in a mirror after a four-hour rehearsal? The image isn't very encouraging. Truthfully, belonging to a serious choir demoted me from the life-style rank of brigadier general to that of buck private.

And we still haven't mentioned the single most humiliating session that I experienced in this endeavor. As someone who acquired musical skills rather late, it behooves me to defer to my professional friends; especially when it

comes to identifying chords, where I'll always be feeling my way. Diminished minor? Inversion? Which mode, and why is it dominant—having suddenly passed from eighth-to-quarter notes?

Using Common Sense

From the moment that all the other female singers abandoned me, leaving a vacuum in their wake and regrouping around Rena, it dawned on me: here in the choir's home base, no one cares whether Rena the Singer is wearing a Prada scarf or a nylon rag on her shoulder. The only concern is Rena's musical ability, period! Choirs and orchestras are not run democratically. They are not the same for all individuals and they are not open to everyone. They're more like a dictatorship—not just that of the conductor, but of abilities—and then only by dint of sweat and tears. Neither a substantial bank balance nor an exalted professional status will help you during an entrance audition, only your ability as a performer. And if it's sufficient to get you in, a pristine and exact niche lies waiting for you in a world which functions altogether differently. The only challenge you face here on a daily basis is to put in a certain quantity of work. Within the quantitative framework of music you're only judged by the number of hours you spend in voice development, preparation of compositions and constant ear training. No advancement should you expect, no matter how much you sweat it; only to succeed at maintaining your present level. And finally, when you will have succeeded in learning Penderecki's *Agnus Dei* by heart, the following week you'll be confronted with yet another battle. This is what's known as a hobby? It's more of a full-time occupation!

In the field of Classical orchestras and choirs you quickly learn to appreciate the term "elitism" and to stop apologizing for it. Once and for all, come what may, whether you are Conservative or Liberal, rich or poor, if you've got the know-how, a good voice and a good ear—you'll be accepted. Only then will you get to know 40 singers who initially seemed to share nothing in common with you besides the fact that every one of them is simply crazy about the Tel Aviv Chamber Choir's pianist, Sacha (Alexander) Wallach, and defers to its admired conductor, Michael Shani.

At first, you will be impressed by the choir's colorful mix of ages, ethnicities and occupations. But within this random mosaic you'll soon find a surprisingly consistent common denominator—even similarities of personality: a readiness to bring this type of music home through the front door; and an openness to culture as a powerful statement that stands second to none. I enter a café and notice someone with a music binder tucked under his arm. For me, this is a telltale sign that the two of us are comrades in arms.

The Slippery Slope of Constructive Criticism

It took me a while to figure out a way of impressing the singers around me. Even without expertise I could at least offer some constructive criticism “We’ve dropped a quarter-tone,” I sourly inform my neighbor Esti; an accomplished alto who’s free of all pretense. In all honesty, even if we had dropped a full major third, my ear would not have discerned it. But the impression that my simple statement made upon Esti was enormous: “What an ear you have!”

Suddenly, in a flash of enlightenment, I am wondering: Is it possible? Can it be that the same food critic who disparaged that charming Arab restaurant just outside of Kfar Ramah knows absolutely nothing about the art of cooking? Does she believe that distortion and fault-finding will automatically boost her higher on the food chain? And what about the spurious professor of literature, the one who excoriated Israel’s most esteemed writers?

Undaunted, on the strength of my initial success I continue to fabricate nonsense. What if I concocted some juicy slander about the conductor, Michael Shani? But enough! The consensus about Michael’s ear has taken many years—and tears—to evolve. He is, after all, a legend for having stopped in the middle of a thundering eight-voiced polyphonic passage and—like an ultrasonic missile— zeroed in to the first altos’ row: “That was not clean; come, let’s hear it again!”

And, dear reader, can you guess who was standing among those altos with her bones trembling? Like most female choristers everywhere, I’m carved out of sturdy stock. In real life, I’ve survived television appearances, spoken before hypercritical audiences all over the world— in diverse languages. And yet, nothing had prepared me for that terrifying moment when I was asked to sing alone for the purpose of determining if I were the one responsible for dragging the group down to a lower level...

So, Why Do I Do It?

I’m glad you asked. It reminds me of Ephraim Kishon’s soccer referee who suffered through rain, heat, blows and curses. As he lay on his deathbed his loved ones asked him, “Why did you choose this profession?” He mumbles a few unintelligible words and expires. Again—why do I do it? I do it only for those rare and all-too-brief golden moments that grab you by the throat (in both senses) when you’re least expecting it.

Case in point: The Meisel Synagogue in Prague. The Tel-Aviv Chamber Choir was invited to sing Vivaldi in that city’s Saint Nicholas Church. But later, in the synagogue with its marble Memorial Wall on which are inscribed the names of Prague’s Jews who were murdered during the Shoah, we’re perform-

ing *Hatikvah* in Gil Aldema's vibrant, intimate yet soul-moving arrangement. You could "hear" the silence that descended over that tourist-filled hall from here to Theresienstadt. The crowd stood there weeping, and so did we, our conductor loudest of all.

Another of these moments occurred in Germany. We'd been invited, along with five choirs from the U.S. and Canada, to perform Leonard Bernstein's *Kaddish* with the highly regarded Nuremberg Orchestra. It was a tremendous and tiring undertaking. But the moment that made it all worthwhile occurred far from the concert hall, in the local community's synagogue where we were all invited, for Friday Night Kiddush. Picture it: a Russian woman cantor and the synagogue packed to its rafters with hundreds of Jewish choristers from all over the world. If it were granted me to bring my father back to life for one minute, I would have brought him there to hear how Jews from the ends of the Earth were all singing his nusah for *Magein Avot!* Judging by the teary faces I saw, it was clear to me that many singers had been accompanied to Nuremberg by the memory of their late parents or grandparents. And that Shabbat melody had returned with them, to the very place from where the decree to obliterate it had gone forth.

There are also moments of beauty which carry no baggage from the past. Just like that, in the middle of a concert, the audience is galvanized. All of a sudden the air becomes electrically charged—understandably so—with the almost religious exaltation that massed voices seem to create. In Brahms' *Song of Destiny*, for instance, the altos begin in a soft whisper, but we know that shortly the entire ensemble will join them in a resoundingly complex *tutti* that will take our listeners' breath away.

And what about those little personal off-site victories? Often, while I'm attending work-related meetings, my mind will sing—unprompted and from memory—the Spanish Renaissance composer Tomás Luis de Victoria's *Magnificat* in eight voices. Go explain to those seated around the table why you're smiling...

At home I find myself arguing with my worn-out piano: "Stop bugging me," I tell it, "patience...tonight, you and I will sit down to go over the cantata." And then, a small everyday miracle of married life takes place. My hubby, overhearing this confusing conversation, slips out the door and quickly returns with a CD of the piece.

Clearly, It's a Misprint

There are also beautiful hours when our conductor commissions a work from an Israeli composer who's still alive and kicking: Oded Zehavi; Menahem

Wiesenberg; Ido Shiron; Gil Aldema; Aviyah Koppelman. Here, where we have a chance to influence the process, shouldn't we grab the opportunity? The composer usually audits rehearsals, paying attention, explaining, and mingling with us.

And there are also funny moments. When setting the verse, "In pain (*be-etsev*) shall you bear children (Genesis 3:16), Koppelman deleted the *bet* from *be-etsev*. The result: "Pain (*etsev*) shall bear children." Around this new text gathered clouds of the most interesting commentary I'd heard in a long while.

"What, exactly, did you mean?" I ask Koppelman. "Oh, it was a mistake," she laughs, "and you've no idea how many dissertations are written on what turn out to be printer's errors once the composer is gone and there's no way to clarify the passage in question with him."

Another truth is discovered. As performers of Classical music we sing lots of Latin and German—and get to spend long hours debating the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth—in the company of our friends Mozart and Bach. But what's the choice? Suddenly, it's time to sing

If I had a son, a little son...Uri ekra lo, Uri sheli (Uri, I'd call him; Uri, my son.)

We sing it to Koppelman's new tune that takes the early-twentieth century poetess Rachel Bluwstein back to her roots via a lovely Russian lullaby. A vibrant echo rises from the choir's ranks. With this text, one that expresses the longing of a barren mother who waits—as Mother Rachel waited—we surely know the exact reason for these words and what underlies them. True, we also sing, "Forgive us, Jesus; do not harm us, O Holy Spirit," pro forma, as it were. But when we sing, *Uri*, we do so mindfully, as if we really meant it (performed July 6, 2005 at Tel Aviv Museum).

Was There a Budget?

As with anyone who has unexpectedly been catapulted into Israel's musical scene, I too, am dumbfounded by the hardships encountered in keeping an organization like ours afloat. How much easier it is to set up a bloated budget for producing a book on meatballs, and how much harder it is to raise even a quarter of that amount for promoting a new work of art. I should note, appreciatively, that music critics have been the most vocal in alerting our public to this dilemma, together with institutional enablers—like the Rich Foundation—which stand silently behind the scenes, supporting most of Israel's cultural activity.

Sometimes I think the best solution for a failing government is to have it start a choir. Within one week all the lay-offs would cease and new order and organization would reign over all.

It's now seven years that I've been observing in amazement this model of lean and efficient leadership. The conductor comes to every rehearsal and (naturally) to every concert, far in advance of even the earliest singers and instrumentalists who arrive. And he is always the last to leave. If a grand piano is rented for the hall in Tiberias, it's always there in plenty of time. Soloists habitually stand around waiting before the appointed hour, fully prepared with every line. Excuse me for asking, but have you ever seen a self-contained universe comparable to this, anywhere?

It's free of meaningless expressions like "You can count on me," "It'll be fine," "and "It's all in God's hands." Could the reason that we undertake this demanding avocation be that it serves as a refuge for principles that no longer exist? For example: following a schedule to the second; giving your all until the final note; planning each concert as if it were a military operation; and even—hard to believe—acquiring knowledge and absorbing culture for its own sake.

Neither Grand Nor a Finale

In her unforgettable book, *Heartburn*, Nora Ephron apologizes to her readers for having introduced 20 new characters into the story without warning, namely, her entire support group. I, too, apologize—to my family members for having introduced 40 men and women without warning into our already full life. And with these strangers, from when I first opened that door, came a multitude of soloists, composers, conductors, critics, stagehands, musical arrangers, chorales, orchestras, producers, madrigal singers, voice teachers, CDs, recording studios and audiences.

I believe, however, that my family members have finally gotten used to all of the above, because now they are not only demanding encores, they've begun to submit special requests!

Nira Rousso is a well-known food writer who regularly writes the "Taste of Life" column for the Israeli newspaper Yediot Aharonot with a readership of 1.5 million in Israel, the U.S. and Europe, and also reports on zany episodes from her wide-ranging personal experiences. In this piece, she reveals an unexpectedly serious—though typically irrepressible—side. The article—"Ad HaTav Ha-aharon"—first appeared on July 7, 2005, and is reprinted here with the Author's kind permission. Cellist Ohad Bar David of the Philadelphia Orchestra helped in its translation.

2) Reflections of a Synagogue Chorister

by Edward Katz

Nira Rousso's article, "Until the Final Note," reveals in accurate and entertaining fashion the quasi-secret world of the serious amateur chorister. It is a difficult world for others to comprehend. Indeed, why *do* choral singers like Rousso spend so many hours per week attending rehearsals, learning music, and foregoing less demanding leisure activities so they can devote themselves to their chosen hobby?

It is not my intention to provide an answer since I, too, have been an amateur chorister for over thirty years now, twenty of them with four separate synagogue choirs. Like Nira Rousso standing bedraggled before a communal dressing-room mirror in Kiryat Gat after an exhausting four-hour rehearsal, I often reflect upon what it is that motivates me to wake up at 6:30 a.m. on Saturday, drag myself to the 8:00 o'clock choral warm-up and then confine myself to a stuffy choir loft above the bimah for some three-and-a-half hours.

I am not a very "observant" Jew, as the word is usually used. My late parents never attended services, not even on High Holidays, and so I followed suit. They did, however, have the wisdom to send me to a Jewish day school (of which Montreal has an abundance), so I learned to read, write, speak and daven in Hebrew at school, even if I did not do so in shul.

My late Dad was a cellist who evidently passed on some of his musical talent to me. I took up clarinet in high school, went back to it after completing medical school and played clarinet in a military band for 15 years. I also happened to have a fairly good singing voice, so in the early 1970s I joined a secular Jewish choir which sang Yiddish and Hebrew folk songs. Three years of private voice lessons and a year of theory and ear training at McGill University's Conservatory of Music improved my technique.

I dropped out of the Jewish secular choir and joined the St. Lawrence Choir, the amateur component of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra Chorus. We rehearsed weekly in a church basement and would join the twenty-five professional choristers for the final rehearsals at Place des Arts, the city's concert hall, which were led by Maestro Charles Dutoit. We performed much of the classical choral repertoire, including Beethoven's 9th Symphony, and the Requiems of Mozart, Fauré, Verdi, et al. Rousso's depiction of the Tel-Aviv Chamber Choir's conductor Michael Shani, reminded me of the St. Lawrence Choir's chorus master Iwan Edwards. He, too, was an incredible musician, almost always in good humor, who could nevertheless cast a terrifying glance

at any individual chorister whose pitch or rhythm was slightly off. Unlike Nira Rouso, however, we were required to re-audition annually to maintain our places, and every year, a few of us were asked to leave. But I always seemed to pass my auditions. On one occasion, Edwards even remarked that, despite my only modest sight-reading ability, I always knew my music. (If he had only known how many hours I—and evidently, Nira Roussa as well—spent each week learning the repertoire...)

After my St. Lawrence Choir experience, the singing that I've been doing in Conservative synagogue choirs has proved different in one other important respect, quite confusing at first. The choir lofts were generally screened off—we could not easily see downstairs—so I never actually knew what the cantor or congregation were doing while we performed set prayers or the basic liturgical responses. Luckily, I could read Hebrew, and followed along in the siddur without much difficulty. In time, I grew to know the prayer order, and would attend services even on those Saturdays when the choir did not sing.

I began to appreciate the beauty of *hazzanut* and to understand how lucky we were to live in Montreal, with its rich tradition of cantorial music. I changed venues to join one of Canada's finest synagogue choirs, the Shaare Zion Congregation Choir. During my third year there, I also became a founding member of a seven-voice semi-professional mixed liturgical chamber choir, Shir Hama'alot. I now sing regularly at the Orthodox Chevra Kadisha Congregation, and substitute occasionally at Shaare Zion.

There is no question that singing in synagogue choirs has strengthened my knowledge of, and commitment to, Judaism. I am still not an active synagogue member, however, and steer away from committee work, synagogue politics, fund-raising, etc. It is my love of synagogue music that keeps me going back, nearly every Saturday. When the choir does not sing, I will sit and pray with the congregation. But I am always quietly humming the baritone line of whatever piece we happen to be davening, hoping that no one else can hear me, except perhaps for *Hashem*.

Edward Katz, M.D. is a full-time medical adviser for Quebec's Occupational Health and Safety Board. He also sees private patients in a local clinic when he's not singing in several synagogue choirs or with a French-Canadian group or discussing the finer points of Jewish liturgical music with other enthusiasts worldwide, via the JLM forum (shulmusic.org).

A Woman Reborn: Name-Changing Service for Women Traveling a New Path in Life

by Dorothy Goldberg

Introduction

This ceremony — to be used after a major life-changing event such as illness, divorce, widowhood, surgery, etc. — draws upon two ancient rituals: the changing of one's Hebrew name, and a woman's periodic immersion in the mikvah. I wrote it originally for a friend who had undergone gastric bypass surgery and who, after nearly losing her life in the aftermath, found that a year or so later she was literally a shadow of her former self. An earlier form of this service helped give her the strength to embrace her new physical and emotional self and to begin again, literally, as a new person. The ritual can take place in the antechamber of a mikvah, or by a natural body of water or swimming pool.

* * * * *

(Group gathers around the celebrant, singing *V'-Od HaPa'am* or the like)

The musical score consists of six staves of music in G major, with various time signatures (3/4, 4/4, 3/8, 2/4, 3/4, 3/8, 2/4, 3/4, 3/8, 2/4, 3/4, 3/8, 2/4, 3/4, 3/8, 2/4, 3/4, 3/8, 2/4). The lyrics are written below the notes.

V'-od ha-pa-am yo - fi - u kokh- vei_ sha- har ve - sha-ru, ve - sha-ru
 shi-rat a-ha-vah le-fa - ne - cha, shi-rat a-ha-vah le-fa - ne - cha.
 v'od ha-pa-am yei -tsei ha-she-mesh big- vu - ra - to ve- shar, ve- shar_ **Fine**
 shi-rat or_ le-fa - ne - cha, shi-rat or_ le-fa - ne - cha.
 v'od ha-pa-am ya - shi-ru mal'-a-khim, od ha-pa-am ya - shi-ru mal'-a khim **D.C.**
 shi-rat ko-desh le-fa - ne - cha, shi-rat ko-desh le-fa - ne - cha. **al Fine**

Example 1. *V'-od HaPa'am*; words by Hillel Zeitlin, music by Benjamin Maisner

Leader:

Today we gather around _____ as her loving friends and family, to bless her with strength and courage and to celebrate the start of a new phase of her life. To mark the importance of this change of direction, we are witnessing the change of her Hebrew name. This is of great importance in Jewish tradition, for it is by our given name that God and the angels recognize us. We understand this ancient ritual – originally intended to deflect the Angel of Death – in a more modern context. We recognize that even in the midst of life, we experience death and rebirth. By changing _____’s Hebrew name, we are empowering her to think of her destiny as a clean slate and to embrace her future as her own. We participate in this ceremony today not to ward off death, but to embrace life anew.

Celebrant:

In my life, I have had many identities: daughter, friend, partner, wife, mother _____, (profession) _____. All these identities are part of me, forming the mosaic of experience that I bring to this ceremony today. None of these identities are forgotten, none are lost. But now, as I set out to rebuild my life after (illness, divorce, losing a loved one, changing careers, _____), I acknowledge that I am walking a new path. By taking on a new Hebrew name, I hope to find a way to leave behind old patterns and pain, while holding dear the beauty of all I have learned and gained in my life. Today, I begin walking a way of peace, balance and wholeness.

Leader:

Our Sages have said that four things can cancel the decree of judgment upon a person. They are: ts’dakah, t’fillah, a change of behavior, and a change of name. Today, we interpret this talmudic saying to mean that your destiny is never fixed. Dear _____, ts’dakah — which you have given — is an act of generosity that will help you to change the world in a positive way. T’fillah — which you have offered — will help you to sense the Divine within you and to reach for your better self. A change of behavior — which you initiate with this ceremony — can help you to determine our own destiny. These three things you have already undertaken as you enter this new phase of your life. Changing your name — which you are about to do — will give you the fourth spiritual tool to help you along your new path.

(Celebrant gives description and history of new name and reason for choosing it)

(Leader: chants *Bshivah Shel Ma'alah* or the like)

Bi - shi-vah shel ma' a-lah u-vi - shi-vah shel ma-tah, al da - at ha- ma - kom, v' al
da - at ha - ka - hal, a - nu m'-sha - nim
et sh' meikh mei - le -

The musical score is written on three staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It features a melody with several triplet markings (indicated by a '3' above the notes) and various rests. The lyrics are written below the notes, with some words connected by lines to indicate phrasing or breath marks.

Example 2. *Bshivah Shel Ma'alah*, after Gedaliah Rabinowitz

Leader:

_____, you stand in the presence of family and friends — and in the presence of God — before whom we now change your Hebrew name from _____ to _____. If a decree was issued against (old name), it was not issued against (new name). And just as your former name has been discarded, so may you cast away old fears and grievances. May your life from this moment on be filled with compassion and health. We pray that the Source of Life send lasting physical and spiritual well-being to you — (new Hebrew name) — and prolong your days and years. May you enjoy a life of vigor and health from this day forward; *ve-khen yehi ratzon* — may this be God's will.

All: Amen.

Celebrant:

Adonai, Ro'i, bless me with the courage to handle life's surprises.

Grant me the strength to overcome adversity.

Guide me with the light of Your Shekhinah, so that I never again lose my way.

Make me aware that my life is in Your hands, and that You are with me, always.

All:

May God walk with you and protect you on your journey.

Leader:

The prophet Jeremiah refers to God as *mekor mayim hayyim* “the Fountain of Living Waters” (2:13). _____, you are about to immerse yourself in *mikveh mayyim hayyim* as a sign of your commitment to wash away old fears and behaviors that prevented you from adapting to life’s changes in the past. Water has always been the agent of purification and renewal. This ritual immersion marks a new beginning; grasp it with all the courage and strength that we as a community – and your faith in our Creator – can give you.

(Leader and Celebrant enter mikvah room)

Celebrant:

Barukh atah, Adonai, eloheinu melekh ha’olam, asher kid’shanu b’mitsvotav, v’tsivanu al ha-t’villah.

(Immersion here first time. After second time, take a few moments for private prayer. After third time, read poem or prayer brought along by Celebrant or Leader. Celebrant then dries off, puts on covering garment and she and leader join friends in adjoining room.)

Leader:

May God’s Shekhinah protect you in the shelter of Her Wings as you walk in the footsteps of Deborah and Hannah. May your voice echo with theirs and with those of our ancestors who sang to Miriam in the Wilderness.

(Leader leads all in singing Ali Be’er or the like)

Numbers 21: 17-18

Lively $B^b m$ $E^b m$ F 1. $E^b m$ 2. F **Fine**

Refrain A - li be'er, e - nu___ lah, A - li b'er e - nu___ lah; A - nu___ lah. B' -

A^b G^b F $B^b m$

er___ ha - fa - ru - ha - sa - rim, ka - ru - ha n' - di - vei - am. **D.C.**

A^b G^b F $B^b m$ **al Fine**

bim' - ho - keik b' - mish - a no - tam, bim - ho - keik b' - mish - a - no - tam.

Example 3. *Ali B'er*, after Avshalom Cohen, 1955.

Celebrant:

I thank God for having kept me in life, sustained me, and enabled me to reach this transforming moment.

(All sing *Birkhat SheHeheyanu*)

Ba - rukh a - tah Ado - nai E - lo - hei - nu me - lekh ha - o - lam, she -

he - - he - ya - nu v' ki - 6 - ma - nu, v' -

hi - gi - a - nu, laz - man ha - zeh.

Example 4. *Birkat Sheheheyanu*

Leader:

We now call you by your new name, _____ bat _____, which links you in love to those who share your new life. May this name bring respect to you, and honor to the Jewish people.

(All sing *T'fillat HaDerekh*, by Debbie Friedman¹)

Gentle, flowing

mf

May You be blessed as you go on your way, may you be guided in
 peace, may you be blessed with
 health and joy, may this be our blessing, A - men.

Example 5. *T'fillat HaDerekh*, music and lyrics by Debbie Friedman

Dorothy Goldberg was ordained as a cantor in 2005 at the Academy for Jewish Religion. She holds a BA in History from Bryn Mawr College, an MA in Journalism and Public Relations from American University, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Performance and Communications from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. She is cantor of Temple Beth Tikvah in Madison, CT and lives in Wallingford, CT with her husband and two children.

¹ Full score appears in *Debbie Friedman Favorites* (San Diego: Sounds Write Productions), 1995:45; soundswrite@aol.com.



THE CHOIR LOFT

by Deborah Weisgall

My father observes Yom Kippur, the day of Atonement, in Rockland, Maine, in a little white clapboard synagogue that was built as a Seventh Day Adventist church. My father leads the services, and my brother and I stand on either side of the lectern and sing the choir parts. We have been doing this for about eight years, and the first year the voices of the real choir I heard throughout my childhood echoed so strongly in my ears that I wept, our singing was so meager in comparison. This year, their voices were faint; I had trouble hearing their harmonies, and their loud absence did not shake my bones and leave me small and sad. I was afraid I was forgetting, so I am writing this.

* * * * *

My grandfather was a cantor in Baltimore. He emigrated in 1920 from Ivancice, a town in Moravia, with his wife, my father, who was seven, and my uncle, an infant. My father was born in that town, where my grandfather was a cantor. In Hungary, once, years ago, we drove through villages near the Czech border which my father said were very much like Ivancice. Low gray stucco buildings shuttered against the main street, few trees, lots of dust; when my father was young and the roads weren't paved there was probably even more. There were animals, then, too, I imagine. My impression was of grayness, land, sky and houses, and empty streets.

The synagogue in Baltimore was called Chizuk Amuno, which means "the strength in faith." It was the German synagogue, and although my grandfather had married into a Hungarian, and German-speaking, family (and in Ivancice, Jews spoke German, gentiles spoke Czech), he had been born in Poland and was eastern European, by definition, lower class. But he was handsome, with thick hair, a strong nose, blue eyes and full, curling lips; he cultivated a mustache and wore a hat and fine gabardine suits and carried a cane, and he looked as distinguished as the richest member of the congregation.

My father and his little brother sang in the choir and studied Hebrew every day after school. They, and later my brother and I and our cousins, grew up in the synagogue near the Druid Hill reservoir. It was made from large blocks of golden limestone, the rock of Jerusalem. It faced east, it had arched windows glazed with watery squares of stained glass in shades of blue-green, and it had a green copper dome. Inside, it was open to the dome like an opera house, with a wide balcony for the women, along three walls. The front facade had three double walnut doors under a portico at the top of a broad flight of limestone stairs.

We always used the side door and the back stairs that led to the bimah, the broad low platform raised three steps above the congregation. We stopped in the doorway and waved to my grandfather at his lectern — he was always there before us. We called him by his first name, Abba, which means father in Hebrew. We continued up the narrow stairs, past a men's room and a little antechamber with a metal pipe coat rack, to the choir loft.

Years later, when the congregation built another house of worship out in the suburbs, they tried to sell the building by the reservoir. The neighborhood was deteriorating and turning Black. But Abba said that he built that synagogue with his own hands; he had raised the money for it, and he was stubborn and seventy-four. He refused to move to the developments and the brick and glass warehouse they had the nerve to call a temple — the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD. For twenty years the congregation supported two buildings, the one out there where everybody went for bar mitzvahs and where you needed tickets for the High Holy Days, and the one in town, which they let get grimy and rundown, but where every day my grandfather collected a minyan, the quorum of ten men necessary to hold a service.

As long as they lived in Baltimore, my father and uncle sang in the choir. My father, a composer, became its conductor and sang baritone; my uncle, a bass, was a lawyer and a jazz pianist. Every Saturday and every holiday the choir sang. My brother joined the choir when he turned six; he was paid five dollars a week. On Saturdays he and my father would leave the house at quarter-to-nine in the morning.

I did not go with them. I was a girl. It was a men's choir. Although women no longer were segregated and relegated to the balcony, the services were for men. Moreover, my family did not pay much attention to its women. My mother felt her exclusion keenly. It was a difficult situation because she had not been raised in a religious family, and my father's parents also looked down on

her for her lack of knowledge. She felt she couldn't win. Often I felt that I was her hostage; I would do everything I could not to be an outcast like her.

Sometimes I would go with my father, mainly on holidays; sometimes my mother would bring me downtown, late. The choir loft was built like a box in a theater separated by a curtain from the rest of the balcony. It was over the bimah. I sat on its marble ledge and peeked through a velvet curtain that was drawn across the lower third of the arched opening. From that perch I looked directly down on my grandfather at his lectern in front of the ark where the Torahs, the scrolls of the law, were kept. My grandfather and the rabbi stood back-to-back. The rabbi faced the congregation. Abba faced God.

People dressed to go to this synagogue, in fur trimmed suits and veiled hats, in high heels and perfume: Mrs. Hecht, whose family owned a fancy department store; Mrs. Hutzler, whose family owned its fancier competition; this congregation was chic. The more conservative men like Mr. Moses wore hats, the others put on yarmulkes at the door. I wore my new clothes first to shul, Yiddish for school, which is what we called the synagogue. Spring coats and cotton dresses and patent leather shoes for Passover, plaid wool skirts and red shoes for Rosh HaShanah, although it was usually too hot for wool, especially up in the choir loft. I measured myself in that place. As I grew, people noticed and commented I was the cantor's granddaughter. I felt a terrible need to be beautiful and smart. It was expected. To this day, I never worry more about what I look like than when I am dressing to go to a synagogue, and I never worry more about making a mistake.

I felt awe in that choir loft, and deep frustration and anger, but I also learned a familiarity with religion, and a backstage affection for it. We were the cast of this production. The second bass worked for the National Brewing Company, one of the tenors was a jeweler, another sold men's clothes. When it was time for them to sing, they sang, but when it wasn't, during the Torah reading and especially during the sermon, they crowded into the men's room for a smoke or sat in the antechamber and read the papers. They sent my brother to the drugstore across the street for Cokes if it wasn't Yom Kippur (and threatened to send him out for cheeseburgers if it was); they argued politics, played checkers and told jokes.

Jokes. My uncle told jokes all the time. My father could have already blown his pitch pipe and be raising his hand for the choir's cue, it could be Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, and my uncle would crack a joke. "Two goyim were walking by a shul, and they heard a strange noise. 'What's that?' one says to the other. 'They're blowing the shofar,' the other guy answers. 'Boy,' says the first guy, 'they sure know how to treat their help.'" A sick choked chord would

issue from the choir loft, my grandfather would look up, his mouth open from singing, his eyes narrowed in fury, and he would shake his fist.

The congregation thought he was imploring God; we knew he was threatening my uncle, and we laughed even harder.

Then, every year, while the congregation and the rabbi were busy reading responsively in English, my uncle leaned out over the railing and in a stage whisper told my grandfather that down there it might be Yom Kippur, but up here in the choir loft, it was Simkhas Torah, a holiday of feasting and rejoicing. This went on every year, the same jokes, the same fury.

My father would tell my uncle to stop acting like an idiot, and the choir would sober up and sing. On the High Holy Days there were at least twelve men, and when they sang the sound rang in my ears until I could hardly breathe. The floor vibrated under my new shoes, and the thick brass curtain rail trembled in my hand. I was afraid, and transfixed.

There had been cantors in my father's family for five generations, singers and composers. My grandfather sang their music and the traditional central European melodies, hundreds of them, many of which he wrote down for the first time; his was one of the few voices left after the second World War which knew these songs. He also wrote his own music, always for his solo (he was a high baritone but he tried to sing tenor) accompanied by choir, with baritone and bass solos for my father and uncle. There was no eastern European whining and wailing here; this music was rich and melodic. It sounded like Schubert, like Verdi, then there would be a tune as modal and haunting as a troubadour's, as ancient as the medieval hymn it accompanied. Each holiday had its own music, its particular melodies that recurred again and again, its leitmotifs.

My grandfather's music was lavish, excessive, glorious. He resented it when the rabbi interrupted to read a passage in English. My grandfather repeated those passages, especially slowly in Hebrew. He sang the entire service; eyes closed, he vaulted into arpeggios and falsetto cadenzas. He was gorgeous in his black robe, in a white robe for the High Holy Days, and in his hat, black or white, shaped like the onion dome of a Russian Orthodox church. He thumped the beat with his palm on the lectern.

My father's pitch pipe wheezed like a harmonica as he tried to follow my grandfather's wanderings from key-to-key. From the choir loft my father, his eyes bulging with frustration, hissed "C sharp!" or "Papa, G!" but Abba rarely paid attention. He was obeying the psalm: "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, come before his presence with singing."

I could not sing. My voice was high, and it wavered. It was too high to hitch a ride on any of the men's voices. I heard their harmonies in a tangle, and I could not separate one line and stay with it. My father laughed at me. "You're just like your mother," he said, "you can't carry a tune." Cruel. I did not want to be like my mother, I wanted to be like the men.

It was not until years later that I understood what made my father speak to me that way: he, a grown man in his forties, was still chasing his father, who was never going to let him catch up. My anger has simmered down, though it's never entirely gone; my father, after all, let my brother sing. But perhaps it has been up to me to let my father know that I want to sing, too. And over the years he has heard.

* * * * *

The synagogue, then, held much I could not do, and much of what I wanted. This tradition, this world of suffering and rejoicing to music in a foreign language, was too intricate for a child to understand. I could not read Hebrew fluently like my grandfather and father; nobody in my generation could; the letters, elegant black teardrops, often made no sense despite Hebrew school three times a week. At the Passover seders my grandfather made each of us children read aloud from the Haggadah, and if we hesitated even for a second over a syllable, he jumped in with a correction. Out of self-defense, we smart ones memorized paragraphs and interrupted his chanting to read the same words every year. I did not understand Hebrew grammar until I studied it in college. But understanding was never the point: wonder was.

There was an abundance of wonder. We celebrated to excess. On Hanukkah, when most families lit one menorah, we lit four. The seder table extended into the living room, my grandfather had so many guests for Passover. After his wife died, Abba cooked everything but dessert: eggs, gefilte fish, matzo ball soup, meat, vegetables. The women baked cakes and competed for praise; they also served and cleared the elaborate meal. The men sang. I wanted to stay at the table and sing, but my mother, who hated helping, made me help her. Later, when I was older, I — never one to avoid a battle — baked, too.

We sang every paragraph of the Haggadah. We went on for hours after dinner; we had two or three melodies for some of the psalms and prayers: my great-grandfather's, my great-great-grandfather's, Mrs. Werner's father's (Mrs. Werner was a refugee from Hitler who came to the seders and whose cakes, to the distress of the women in my family, were superb). Abba shouted at everybody — his children, his grandchildren — to behave; he pounded on

the table for silence, which he never got, and to keep the rhythm. By now the damask tablecloth was stained lavender from spilled wine.

My grandfather, my father and my uncle: their three loud, competing voices dominated the singing. The rest of us, according to our natures, continued to audition or we shut up. We ended the seder with Had Gadyoh, a song of a kid eaten by a cat, which was eaten by a dog, which was killed by an ox, verse by verse, all the way up to the Angel of Death, and the Holy One, Blessed be He. The Angel of Death was my grandfather's solo. When I grew up, the last verse, the Holy One, Blessed be He, became mine. After I finished, we repeated that verse, as loud and as fast as we could and ended on a wild, dissonant chord, through which, holding some note uniquely her own, I could always make out my mother's piercing alto.

We sighed with relief — we were nervous about pleasing Abba; was he worried about pleasing God? — and exhaustion and satisfaction. It had been a good performance. The next night, we did it all over again, every word, every note; even the arguments, the yelling at my cousins, the resentments over who had to clear the table, became part of the service.

Once a year on Sim^hat Torah, the day when the reading of the five books of Moses is completed and begun again, we celebrated in the synagogue. I remember the procession of the Torahs, with their silver breastplates and pointers and bells, carried around the synagogue seven times by the men in the congregation, and we children, carrying paper Israeli flags and apples, brought up the rear. The women, who did not carry Torahs, crowded to the aisles to kiss the scrolls.

The year I was twelve I demanded to be permitted to carry a Torah in the procession. My father argued my case, and I was given a small one, dressed in deep red velvet with gold embroidery. I was the first woman in the history of the congregation to do so. I don't think I have ever felt prouder, or more uneasy.

Soon after that, my father got a job in New York. We only returned to Baltimore for the High Holy Days and Passover. We joined a synagogue on Long Island; my brother and I attended Hebrew school, but not services. They were ugly. The music was ugly, the cantor had a terrible voice, and I had never had to sit through a sermon in my life. The demotion to audience was not as painful as the lack of beauty in the performance. It was an exile.

But in my first year at college, I decided not to fly to Baltimore for Yom Kippur. I dreaded that day because of the fasting and the long services, the endless repetition of sins, all of which I had committed, the stories of martyr-

dom, centuries of slaughter. I thought by staying away I could avoid the dread. The eve of the holiday, I went with friends in Boston to their synagogue for Kol Nidre services. From the first note, I wept, from homesickness and the unbearable ugliness of the sound. The next morning, I took a seven o'clock plane to Baltimore. I never felt so welcomed or loved. My father wept when he saw me; but I was coming back for an even deeper comfort.

In the afternoon as we began the Ne'ilah service, just before sundown, low golden light from the big windows filled the synagogue, gilding the walls and the bimah and the white velvet curtain of the ark, gilding the Torahs in their white velvet covers, shining on the hair of the children in the congregation and on my grandfather's white hair below his domed hat. I felt the exaltation of the day like sunlight on my body. I was being cleansed. I loved this moment, these men; this is what I was, what I was privileged to know, however imperfectly.

Ne'ilah means closing; the last service of Yom Kippur, it symbolizes the closing of the gates of heaven. Our fate for the coming year has been written, and sealed at Ne'ilah into the Book of Life, or Remembrance, or Deeds; that book has many names. The melodies for the High Holy Days are repeated for the last time in the last confessions, the last pleas for forgiveness. The service ends with a declaration of faith. The Shema: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One" is said once. "Bless the name of the Lord" is repeated three times, and "The Lord, He is God" is repeated seven times, followed by one long note on the shofar, the ram's horn. My grandfather was in his eighties; his voice blasted like a shofar, round and full without vibrato, a call in the wilderness echoing in the synagogue dome. He counted the repetitions on his fingers so he wouldn't get lost, and so did my father and my uncle. I never tried to stay away again.

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Abba was getting old; his memory was going. A layer of gray grime coated the limestone walls of the synagogue, and broken panes of the watery glass had been replaced with cheap clear ones. The white velvet curtains were yellowed; the curtain across the choir loft badly frayed; only five men came to sing in the choir on Yom Kippur. Finally one year my grandfather did not conduct services; he didn't even know what day it was. My father took his place, at sixty-three a cantor for the first time.

That afternoon I was taking a break in my grandfather's apartment across the street from the shul. He looked up from his chair and asked me whether today was Yom Kippur. It was, I said. He was upset. He insisted on getting

dressed. He put on his beige gabardine suit and his felt Homburg and asked for his silver-banded cane. We took the elevator downstairs and walked slowly across the street, up the stone steps to the front door of the synagogue. We walked down the aisle and sat in the front row of the congregation. My father was just beginning Ne'ilah. The ark was open, and the sun gleamed on the silver Torah ornaments. The synagogue was filled with golden light and a feeling of heady tiredness after a day of fasting. In his beautiful, deep voice, my father sang the last supplications: "Our Father, our King, seal us in the Book of Life, answer our prayers, look upon us with righteousness and kindness, save us."

He took the shofar out of its cover and put it on the lectern. My grandfather stood. "Take me up," he ordered. I held his arm, but he didn't need help. He walked to the steps of the bimah and shook me away. He mounted the stairs and crossed to the lectern. My father moved aside. My grandfather gripped the lectern with both hands, tilted his head back to the heavens and with a voice clear and full and piercing as a young man's he began the Shema: "Hear O Israel..."

He was magnificent; he was a glorious old man. He knew God listened when he prayed; God was his real audience. Abba stole the show. My heart went out to my father.

The following year, Abba stayed home, and my father got through the whole day alone. Then a group of people tired of the suburbs reincorporated the synagogue into a new congregation that hired its own full-time cantor. We stopped going to Baltimore for the holidays. Abba had to be moved to a nursing home. At the end of his life he had forgotten everything but music; he knew no one. But when my father visited and sang, perhaps a Sabbath prayer, Abba sang along and recognized his son's voice.

Abba died when he was ninety-six. My father did not know where to hold the funeral. "In shul," my brother and I said. "It's too big," my father answered. "Nobody remembers him. Nobody will come." Well, the house was sold out, as we used to say in the choir loft. All the old choir members were there; they sang from the bimah. After the funeral, we had a party, and my uncle, the jazz pianist, improvised to the tune of a Sabbath prayer: "The Torah is a tree of life."

I'm not sure how it happened, but my father never missed a Yom Kippur. He found the synagogue in Rockland, Maine. We have lived near there summers for more than thirty years, but never had much to do with the small Jewish community, which has been here since the turn of the century. The

congregation includes lawyers and doctors, dentists and merchants, a man who works on a herring boat, a woman who bakes bagels, and the mayor of Monhegan Island. At least one woman in the congregation dresses to kill.

My father is a distinguished composer; at the age of seventy-three he's even becoming famous. And there he is, every year on the High Holy Days. I'm immensely grateful to the congregation for having us. Otherwise we'd have no place to go. In the beginning I think they were uncomfortable that I, a woman, stood on the bimah throughout the services, but I'm part of the act, and now, as long as I wear a yarmulke, they don't mind. To my surprise, I know the service practically by heart, the words and the music.

While my grandfather was alive, we could not begin the Kol Nidre service without tears. My father and my brother and I would weep, remembering what it was like, the grandeur, the singing that you could hear outside on the street, remembering my grandfather beginning the prayers. Nobody but this family knows that music; I don't know whether it was lost in the murders of the Second World War or in the promise of America. We used to mourn what was lost; this year we did not weep. Maybe it hasn't all been lost, or maybe we're healed.

One prayer for me is the most beautiful of the service; a part of it goes: "The shofar is sounded. A still, small voice is heard. Even the angels are frightened and tremble as they say: "The day of judgement is here!" It was the choir's big number, solos for everybody, complicated vocal lines, a real production. I don't think that the tenor ever came in on cue; my father always yelled at him afterwards.

In Maine at first we used to try and fake it, but the echoes of the old choir were louder in our ears than we were. It's gotten simpler each year. This year, my father even forgot to give my brother his solo, which used to belong to my uncle. Next year, my brother won't let him make that mistake.

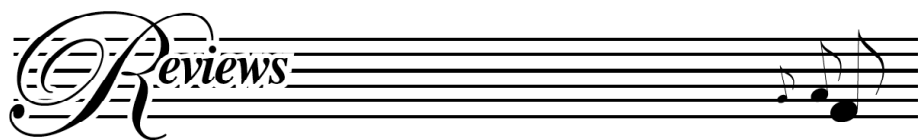
This year the holidays fell in October; Yom Kippur was cold and clear. In the afternoon, during the break in the services, I went home and changed into jeans and climbed a mountain. Outside it was a secular day, the roads clogged with tourists looking at leaves. I got lost, on a trail I've taken hundreds of times. When I was a little girl my father would take me for a walk around the reservoir on Yom Kippur afternoon. Now he stays in shul all day, as my grandfather did. My father is in his seventies now, but his voice is as pure as ever.

You can see the ocean from the synagogue in Rockland, and you can also smell the sardine factory. I made it back to shul just in time for Ne'ilah. The

street was silent. None of the synagogue's neighbors is Jewish. It's a street with few trees, potholes, nondescript clapboard houses, a couple of tied-up dogs and a little donut shop. It must be like Ivancice, the town where my father grew up.

When he ended the service, he counted the repetitions on his fingers so he wouldn't lose track, and so did my brother, and so did I. My father's voice was deep and loud and clear, and he blew a blast on the shofar that must have lasted half-a-minute, as strong and piercing as the foghorn in the harbor.

*Deborah Weisgall is the daughter of the late composer Hugo Weisgall, founding chair of the Cantors Institute faculty at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and the granddaughter of Abba Yosef Weisgal who served as cantor at Chizuk Amuno Congregation in Baltimore for 52 years. When not climbing mountains in northern New England she's either skiing them or writing novels like **A Joyful Noise** (1999) and a forthcoming novel about George Eliot for Houghton Mifflin, due out in 2008. This reminiscence of incidents that took place in the 50s and 60s was written in 1995.*



Marcia Falk's *Book of Blessings*

Reviewed by Arnold Jacob Wolf

These are not especially devout times in the history of our people's spiritual career. I would not have expected in advance any outpouring of new prayer books of quality and imagination. Perhaps it is precisely the void in our inner lives that calls forth passionate, even somewhat desperate, attempts to refashion and to reconfigure our traditional liturgies. From all wings of Jewish religious life — the Orthodox right, represented by the many prayer books published by Artscroll, the left, exemplified by Marcia Falk's poetic *Book of Blessings*, a non-prayer book, and all the organized movements in between — we have new projects and new volumes of prayers and commentary.

There are two tendencies at work in these new prayer books, and the two seem to me utterly contradictory. One is the recovery of traditional texts: more Hebrew, more lost or formerly objectionable ideas and formulations, more pages of more unfamiliar words that come from the past history of Jewish worship. The other trend is a relentless censorship of words and ideas found ethically impermissible or aesthetically repulsive. The most obvious tendency of this kind is an expression of Jewish feminism, a doctrine that holds that our new liturgy must be rendered gender-free and unmistakably neutral as to male or female in all respects. But this is not the only force at work. The Reconstructionist dogma that the Jews are not a chosen people or the ArtScroll insistence that no word may ever be changed or refocused despite the known history of a changing, indeed an ever-changing Siddur, are both examples of many ideologies at work to fashion the service according to one or another supposed theological principle. Obviously, recovery and reconstruction are compatible only with the greatest of difficulties and the most strenuous kind of manipulation. It is hard to go back to the past when you conceive of that past as patriarchal, primitive, superstitious, or mistaken. It is hard to make the liturgies more attractive and accessible if you hold that the new is *ipso facto* forbidden by the Torah. Yet both tendencies are everywhere at work: recovery and radical innovation are both omnipresent.

The amount of commentary in most of these prayer books suggests that they are as much for study as for davening or, perhaps, that the editors do not trust

people to be able to pray without a good deal of information, encouragement, and motivation. The Reconstructionists, in particular, are very concerned to structure the liturgy most carefully so as to inspire more kavvanah and lead to more spiritual success. One has the feeling about their and others' attempts that sometimes micro-managing community worship does as much harm as good. There is a virtue in spontaneity, even in randomness in prayer, along with fixed formulation.

The commentaries are meant to inform as well as to inspire. Biblical and, often, many other references are provided. Why? For further research, or to shore up the validity of the prayer texts? There seems to be more comfort in trying to understand the words than in trying to communicate with God, the God Who, as Abraham Heschel often said, is the real problem of modern prayer. These books are for the student at least as much as for the worshiper. But it may be that all of us who would become worshipers must begin as students in these times of both spiritual dearth and spiritual awakening.

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Marcia Falk is the acclaimed translator and interpreter of the Song of Songs. For many years she has been working meticulously and cautiously on a book of Jewish prayers which now has appeared, to general approbation and gratitude. While hardly a complete Siddur, her *Book of Blessings* is full of inspired translations of the traditional liturgy and of modern Hebrew and Yiddish poems by women poets whose work is worthy of being heard or heard again.

Poetry is not, however, prayer. Meditation is not quite worship. "Passionate reflection," as Walter Kaufmann called it, is not precisely what Judaism has usually called prayer. Misspelling his name and espousing Kaufmann's views, Falk leaves herself open to the kind of criticism that he deservedly incurred. Whatever these "prayers" turn out to be, they are very beautiful, indeed:

Hal'lu: Praise

Praise the world-
praise its fullness
and its longing,
its beauty and its grief.

bursts through pain
and the moment
when the whole
bursts forth in joy.

Praise stone and fire,
lilac and river,
and the solitary bird at the window.

Praise the dying beauty
with all your breath
and, praising, see

Praise the moment
when the whole

the beauty of the world
is your own.

Sh'ma: Communal Declaration of Faith

Hear, O Israel-
The divine abounds everywhere
and dwells in everything;
the many are One.

Loving life
and its mysterious source
with all our heart
and all our spirit,
all our senses and strength,
we take upon ourselves
and into ourselves
these promises:
to care for the earth
and those who live upon it,
to pursue justice and peace,
to love kindness and compassion.

We will teach this to our children
throughout the passage of the day-
as we dwell in our homes
and as we go on our journeys,
from the time we rise
until we fall asleep.
And may our actions
be faithful to our words
that our children's children
may live to know:
Truth and kindness
have embraced,
peace and justice
have kissed and are one.

One of Falk's polemics is against the separation of body and soul, of "masculine" spirit from "feminine" flesh, as she sometimes implies. This gives her the opportunity to revise the great prayer at the end of the Sabbath, Havdalah, which is preeminently a statement of distinctions between the holy and the profane, between the Sabbath and the week, between Israel and the nations:

Distinctions

Let us distinguish parts within the whole
and bless their differences.

Like the Sabbath and the six days of creation,
may our lives be made whole through relation.

As rest makes the Sabbath precious,
may our work give meaning to the week.

Let us separate the Sabbath
from other days of the week,

seeking holiness in each.

Falk does not believe in a personal God, despite the insistence of her trusted interlocutors, Lawrence Hoffman and Rachel Adler, that only a personal God can inspire or mandate religious commitment. Her visions of the traditional blessings consciously finesse the traditional formulation of God as King or commander Who gives us specific tasks for which we return thanks:

Blessing Before the Meal

Let us bless the source of life
that brings forth bread from the earth.

Blessing After the Meal

Let us acknowledge the source of life,
source of all nourishment.

May we protect the bountiful earth
that it may continue to sustain us,

and let us seek sustenance
for all who dwell in the world.

For her, personality implies anthropomorphism and even speciesism, the dangerous doctrine that people are more precious than other forms of life. (How many plants or animals would she sacrifice to save her child's life, I wonder.) So prayers must reflect the equivalence of all life and all of nature. This is surely problematic for the Jew who accepts a hierarchy of God's creation, however profound our love may be for other species. The moon is equal to the sun, in Falk's eyes. God is nature writ large and, so, transcendence collapses into immanence:

Renewal of the Moon

I lift my eyes to the hills:
heaven and earth are my comforts.
By day the sun does not harm me,
by night the moon is my guide.

It renews its light
for those just beginning,
who will one day find
their own renewal.

May the moon
be as praised as the sun
and all be equal
as when we began.

The real issue is: can we pray what we do not (yet?) believe? Marcia Falk is so certain of what she believes and of what she will never believe that she must bowdlerize the traditional Siddur. For my part, I hardly know what I believe and what I only wish I could believe. Unlike early, rationalistic Reform liturgists, I want the prayer book to express not only my views or even our views, but also what the generations have held to be sacred and what I may some day come to accept. We should not censor our classics to make them conform to our political or theological whim. If this be hypocrisy, make the most of it. Even Falk seems to sense that more is at stake than verbal honesty.

Sanctification over Wine for Sabbath Eve

*There was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.
The heavens and earth were complete, with all their host.*

Genesis 1:31-2:1

Let us bless the source of life
that ripens fruit on the vine
as we hallow the seventh day-
the Sabbath day-
in remembrance of creation,
for the Sabbath is first
among holy days,
recalling the exodus
and the covenant.

In the beauty of these phrases, Marcia Falk has helped us all to hear the words of our tradition and to make some of them our own.

*Arnold Jacob wolf is Rabbi Emeritus of K.A.M. Isaiah Israel Congregation in Chicago, and author of **Unfinished Rabbi: The Selected Writings of Arnold Jacob Wolf**. This review is reprinted with permission on the tenth anniversary of its original appearance in JUDAISM, Spring 1997.*

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Selections from Marcia Falk's "Blessings" — in Song, **Performed by Linda Hirschorn and Fran Avni**

CD available from www.vocolot.com

Reviewed by Kimberly Komrad

This collection, interpreting musically words excerpted from Marcia Falk's *The Book of Blessings: New Jewish Prayers for Daily Life, the Sabbath and the New Moon Festival*, Harper Collins, 1996, is a soothing, calming stream of twenty-one folk-inspired melodies, ranging in duration from twenty-three seconds to nearly five minutes. It sets to music a set of poetic, non-hierarchical, gender-inclusive, alternative Jewish prayers for our time, in Hebrew and English.

The overall feeling of the album is soulful and meditative, with a distinctly feminine gentleness. Its repetitiveness, with a chain of related musical themes, lends itself well to meditation, healing services, women's prayer gatherings, and other creative services.

"Blessing Before the Meal" is particularly lovely, with Linda Hirschorn's and Fran Avni's voices interweaving a tune, beautiful in its simplicity, with soul-touching harmonies. A highlight of the collection is "Sustaining Life, Embracing Death," a song in both Hebrew and English, which leads into a mesmerizing, textured round. The refrain of "Havdalah: Parting Ritual for the Sabbath," which includes voices of men and children, is reminiscent of the Ladino song, "Cuando el Rey Nimrod," but also includes some movingly chanted nusah.

A variety of instruments, including saxophone, flute, trumpet, acoustic and electric guitar, mandolin, bass, keyboard, balalaika, and violin, add a rich world music style backdrop to the collection. Hirschorn's and Avni's voices blend together well, in some very pleasant harmonies throughout. As beautiful as most of the individual pieces are, they have a tendency to run together, sounding very much alike. The album does not offer much variety in rhythm or vocal dynamics, making it a bit fatiguing to listen to in one sitting. Many selections sound like variations of familiar Israeli folk songs. Overall, *Selections from Marcia Falk's Blessings in Song* is a lovely, worthwhile contribution to the body of creative, gender-neutral Jewish prayer music.

Kimberly Komrad is hazzan at Kehilat Shalom in Gaithersburg, MD. She has chaired the Cantors Assembly's Seaboard Region for ten years, and performed cantorial and

operatic music at concerts around the United States. Recently, she lectured on the Aleppo Codex at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC.

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Andrew Bernard's *The Sound of Sacred Time: A Basic Music Theory Textbook to Teach the Jewish Prayer Modes*, 2005

Reviewed by Patrice Kaplan

The art of nusah ha-t'fillah has been an oral tradition for centuries and anyone who has learned Jewish prayer modes knows that the study requires a great deal of oral transmission. That may be especially so because of the dearth of written material on this subject. However, Jews have always found a way to document oral tradition, especially when there was a fear of losing that tradition. In *The Sound of Sacred Time*, Cantor Andrew Bernard presents a clear description and compendium of the basic Jewish prayer modes.

He describes his book as “a basic music theory textbook to teach the Jewish prayer modes...designed for musicians trained in Western tonal theory who are studying traditional Jewish liturgical music...”¹ His training as a musician is obvious (he had earned a Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate in Music even before becoming an invested cantor and receiving his Master of Sacred Music degree). His writing assumes a basic knowledge of western harmony. The book functions well both as a supplement for students of hazzanut and as a reference resource. Its strength lies in the clarity of its exposition and in the volume of its musical examples.

Cantor Bernard first introduces the three basic prayer modes individually in separate chapters — Magein Avot, Ahavah Rabbah, and Adonai Malakh. Chapter Four deals with compound modes and Chapter Five (the final chapter) discusses modulations, excursions and identifying phrases. The first appendix — which occupies approximately one-third of the entire book — charts the prayer modes for Weekdays, Shabbat, High Holy Days and the Three Festivals. The second appendix gives an overview of the history and structure of the Jewish prayer modes.

Cantor Bernard has done an admirable job of dealing with the difficulties of documenting an oral tradition. One of his tools is to cite numerous examples.

1 Andrew Bernard, *The Sound of Sacred Time*, page v.

His main text cites over 170 musical examples, and the first appendix cites nearly 200 additional examples. He has also developed technical prowess in formatting the excerpts and explanations to clearly document the details of his descriptions. His adept use of color, lines, arrows, circles, and boxes in his musical examples makes this text both visually attractive and particularly illuminating.

He has taken a subject that is complex and difficult to explain, and presented it in a well-organized way. He quotes Dr. Eliyahu Schleifer saying in a lecture that the art of cantorial chant is “an endless series of variations on a model which does not exist.”² However, Cantor Bernard uses so many clear examples of *nusah* in his book, and presents his topic so intelligibly, that he nearly does build a model for the student.

His first three chapters are especially commendable in that they explain the modes and give lots of examples. These chapters are similar in style to Charles Davidson’s *Immunim Be-Nusach Ha-Tefillah*, but have no “work-book” aspect — the “answers” for the student are in full view. (On the other hand, Bernard’s text offers no pedagogical approach and is structurally less a textbook than a reference catalogue.) The following two chapters deal with compound modes and modulations, excursions and identifying phrases. These chapters are more in a style of a sampling. (More information on the *Selihah* mode can be found in Davidson’s *Immunim* and Joseph Levine’s *Synagogue Song in America*. More examples of identifying phrases can be found in Appendix C of the latter book, where Dr. Levine charts thirty-nine *Mi-Sinai* tunes, in primary and recurring usage.) Cantor Bernard touches on the Ukrainian-Dorian mode but makes no mention of the Study mode. He takes obvious pleasure in dissecting the prayer modes. The joy of his examination seems to culminate in his final chapter with a setting from *Selihot* by Israel Alter that defies analysis.³

I first encountered this book in its smaller original form as Cantor Bernard’s 1998 thesis for the Master of Sacred Music degree. The thesis version included four chapters: the history and structure of the modes as an overview (now Appendix 2), and the basic descriptions of the three main modes (now the first three chapters). The book version is greatly expanded. One of its highlights is the first appendix — sixty-five pages of extensive charts of *nusah* that are clear and understandable. He writes that this chart is “the resource I’ve always wanted on my bookshelf. It is a quick reference showing the standard

2 Ibid., page 176.

3 Ibid., pages 94 & 95.

liturgy with appropriate nusach.⁴⁴ Now, readers of the *Journal* can be glad to have it on their shelves as well!

The book bears no ISBN number, and is not easily available. Instead, the author can be reached directly: Cantor Andrew Bernard, Temple Beth El, 5101 Providence Road, Charlotte, NC 28226 (704) 366-1948, ext. 107, or cantorb@carolina.rr.com

Patrice Kaplan has served Temple Shalom in Broomall (a suburb of Philadelphia), PA, as cantor for over 20 years. She received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Music from Temple University and her cantorial certification from the American Conference of Cantors. She has served on the executive boards of the Delaware Valley Cantors' Conference and the Women Cantors' Network.

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Abba's Faith — *Emunat Abba: The Sacred Chant of Abba Yosef Weisgal*, transcribed and edited by Joseph A. Levine

Reviewed by Sharon Bernstein

The musical portion of Joseph A. Levine's comprehensive dissertation, *Emunat Abba*, is celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary in a brand new re-release by the Cantors Assembly. While the unpublished Analysis and Biography portions of his doctoral study occupy another 500 pages, the 409 pages of transcribed chant that are the subject of this review include a tremendous array of hazzanic material for High Holy Days, Festivals, Sabbath, Weekday, and special occasions, a chunk of which can't be found elsewhere. Acquiring it should be the easiest decision of 2007.

This book contains some of the most detailed, specific, and careful transcribing that I have seen. Singing through passages, following Joe's distinctive indications ("heroically", "yearningly"), sticking to the meticulous note values and rests, I felt the voice of another cantor, another rhythm and style, coming through me, giving these familiar words new meaning.

There are, in my mind, two uses for a book of hazzanut: one is to find a "piece", a new Kedushah or Kol Nidre; something to add to your repertoire.

4 Ibid., page 103.

There's plenty of that in *Emunat Abba* – pull it out the next time you're in search of a new something.

The other purpose is to learn, to find new possibilities within the nusah, to see how someone else does or did it. It is for this that I find *Emunat Abba* to be so rich: in its presentation of the cantor's art as a balance of fireworks, plain nusah, and congregational melody; in the nusah itself, particularly in the less elaborate settings, which have unexpected twists; and in the inclusion of texts and chanting which you rarely, if ever, find written out, such as Weisgal's cantillation for Yamim Noraim, Shabbat, and Esther, his Torah B'rakhot, Mahashavot B'hasidut, Z'mirot, *She-Hu Noteh Shamayim* following High Holy Day Musaf Aleinu, chunks of the Avodah service, Weekday Minhah, chanting for the Haggadah, portions of Neilah, and a nice alternative for *Bohein Kol Eshtonot*. It's also nice to see basic responsive chanting with the kahal included in places like Kabbalat Shabbat (*L'khu N'ran'na*) and Hallel (*B'tseit Yisraeil & Min Hameitsar*), and a rendition of *Hadlakat ner Hanukah* that is completely different from the ubiquitous version.

The nusah itself tends towards the simple, straightforward. Embellishments, where they occur (more in "big" pieces, almost non-existent in basic passages) fall neatly into the line, and can (if you're working in a no-embellishment zone) be easily cut. There are unusual patterns: extended passages on a single note and much use of chromaticism (chanting on a single note or repeating a motif, going up and down chromatically). His use of accidentals is flavourful, spicy, as in *Uv'Yom Simhat'khem*, the word "t'ruat" going from minor triad to major and back to minor, playing with the A-flat in *Imru Leilohim*, and the E-natural—instead of E-flat—passing downward from G to D on *Sh'vikin* of Kol Nidre, although that might be a common variation I'm not familiar with. Weekday Arvit is mostly in minor, with side trips into major and Ahavah Rabbah (on the same root as the minor), and with a hunky-dory use of the lower 7th. There's a wonderful modality in Kabbalat Shabbat, using much of the scale below tonic, trumpeting C major arpeggios, much use of Ukrainian Dorian and the flatted 7th, and, in F-major, sharpening the F and going into D major, making the overall tone deeper, more mysterious. Some settings, such as *Hamol al Ma'asekha*, are deliciously simple and delicate.

Perhaps least interesting to me in this book are the "bigger" pieces, such as *Marom*, *Unetaneh Tokef*, and *M'hal La'avonoteinu*. They sit quite high – too high for a woman in the pulpit, probably too high for most men as well, with too wide of a range to just transpose them down – and where the single note chanting and chromaticism felt exciting in the less embellished texts, in these sections I found it overly dramatic without enough melodic and harmonic

variance to sustain. Joe Levine took a similar stance in the Foreword to *Emunat Abba*: “My experience [in restoring and transcribing my old mentor’s habitual practice] confirmed what Jewish folk wisdom had known all along, that any oral tradition of music is preferable to its written counterpart. Abba Weisgal’s performance was infinitely more alive and beautiful than his composed pieces, which seem stiff by comparison.”

It is this book’s gift that everyone will find things that are useful and beautiful to them. My favorites, in addition to the pieces mentioned above, are the very beautifully shaped *Hatsi Kaddish* for High Holy Days, a lovely *Shir Hama’alot* melody before Birkat ha-Mazon, the chanting for Brit Milah, an *Eishet Hayil* and *Adonai Ro’i* for Levayah which are exquisite, the beautiful *Mizmor Shir l’yom Hashabat* based on a Roumanian folksong, the Doina-like opening to *Adonai Malakh Ge’ut Laveish*, *Vay’khullu* and *Aleinu* from Shabbat Arvit, the wonderful turn on “avoteinu” at the beginning of Shabbat Shaha^harit *Ya’aleh V’yavo*, the lovely *hatimot* to *R’tseh* and *Hatov* in Shabbat Musaf, *Ein Keiloheinu* sung to a Yugoslavian Folksong, *Ana Adonai*, and the very sweet and lovely beginning to *Tal*.

A huge y’yasher koah and thank you to Joe for allowing us a glimpse into this world, particularly on behalf of those, like me, who didn’t get to hear it first-hand. It is a tremendous work, and should continue to be a pillar of cantorial repertoire and study for decades to come.

Sharon Bernstein has been working as a cantor since 1991. She graduated from the H.L. Miller Cantorial School at JTS in 2003, and has concurrently become an aficionado of Yiddish song, performing and teaching in Israel, Europe—particularly Vilna—and the U.S. She is currently taking a leave from full-time pulpit duties to devote time to her family and to sing in a Punk Rock band.

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Two DVDs: *Great Cantors of the Golden Age*, and *Great Cantors in Cinema*—a remastered edition with seven new selections — produced by the National Center for Jewish Film of Brandeis University

Reviewed by Roslyn Barak

This newly released DVD version of two documentaries is digitally re-mastered and greatly improved from the original videotaped production, which

I've owned for some years now. The upgraded visual and audio quality is immediately apparent, although there are still rough spots, especially the sound quality of the various choirs that accompany the cantors. However, for aficionados of hazzanut this DVD set is a joy to hear and behold.

The first DVD, *Great Cantors of the Golden Age*, boasts a narration by the incomparable Hazzan Max Wohlberg. His introduction to the film is distinguished by its concise explanation of the history of the Golden Age of Hazzanut, starting with the wave of Jewish immigration to the United States at the turn of the 20th century, which brought the cream of Eastern Europe's cantors to these shores. Hazzan Wohlberg's knowledge of each cantor's background is admirable, and he recites their names and professional accomplishments as if he were a baseball fan reciting batting averages. He does this seemingly without notes, an impressive feat, but not unusual in the world of cantorholics, as anyone who has ever mingled with such a group can attest.

What follows is footage of some of the past century's greatest cantors: Gershon Sirota, Mordechai Hershman, David Roitman, Josef Shlisky, Adolf Katchko, and perhaps the most renowned of all — Yossele Rosenblatt. Wohlberg speaks lovingly of each of these great interpreters of the Jewish liturgy, and sets the stage for their performances. Indeed, these *are* performances, specifically intended for a film audience, rather than an experience of actual tefillah. Notwithstanding, the cantors manage to convey an impression of prayer that rings true, even though it is obvious that the staged atmosphere, rolling cameras, and adjustments to God's name as it appears in the liturgy stiffens their demeanor quite a bit. But this is a small price to pay for the privilege of hearing these legendary hazzanim, in the prime of their vocal form, regaling us with their soulful interpretations of great cantorial recitatives, and leaving us a legacy of prayer as art which is fast disappearing in the world of synagogue music.

From Gershon Sirota's powerful (indeed, almost overpowering) rendering of *Hoshana*, to Adolf Katchko's stentorian bass-baritone delivery of *M'lakh*, to Josef Shlisky's lyrical *Uv'-Shofar Gadol*, to the exquisite subtlety and sweetness of David Roitman's *Av HaRahamim* (which actually brought me to tears), to Mordechai Hershman's *Mimkomkha*, gleaming with operatic tenor brilliance, and finally to the masterful and incomparable Yossele Rosenblatt's intense and exciting offering of *Adonai Z'kharanu*, backed by Meyer Machtenberg's choir – where we hear and see Rosenblatt's superb musicality and artistic integrity – we are treated to the most sublime experience of cantorial art. The Meyerbeer-like composition that Rosenblatt presents affords him the opportunity to showcase his extraordinary coloratura and falsetto, but one

is never aware of the performer's own ego in the mix. Rather, it is the music and holy text that drive this extraordinary man. An article in the *New York Times*, which appeared on September 22 of 2006, describes a jazz musician's reaction to a recording of Rosenblatt singing *Tikanta Shabbat*.

I started crying like a baby. The record was crying, singing and praying, all in the same breath. I said, wait a minute. You can't find those notes. Those are not 'notes.' They don't exist...I think he's singing pure spirit...he's making the sound of what he's experiencing as a human being, turning it into the quality of his voice, and what he's singing to is what he's singing about...it doesn't sound like it's going up and down; it sounds like it's going *out*. Which means it's coming from his soul.

This film preserves a remnant of that experience for all time. The art of the cantor remains alive so long as we have witness to that art, though the practice of that art may fade away. We must pity the generations that will never know the excitement and glory of true *hazzanut*. Max Wohlberg ruefully admits that those days are probably gone, yet he argues that it is important to know what once was, even if we are too close to a still emerging American style to be able to make it out. Perhaps we can hope for a future renaissance to occur. In the meantime, the film generously provides a remembrance as well as special features which shouldn't be missed: additional performances by Katchko, Roitman and Rosenblatt, that are equally superb. All in all, this is a worthy production and a gift to the Jewish world.

The second DVD, *Cantors in Cinema*, is narrated by longtime radio and television commentator Martin Bookspan, and focuses on appearances by noted cantors in Hollywood cinematic productions, whether feature films or documentaries. Moishe Oysher's melodramatic performance in *Overture to Glory* (1940) reminds one of the role played by Al Jolson in *The Jazz Singer* (1927): the cantor who becomes a pop singer who then returns to the synagogue on (what else?) the eve of Yom Kippur, to chant *Kol Nidre* (and, in this case, replace poor Manfred Lewandowski mid-chant). This is a delightful opportunity to see Oysher at his entertaining and cantorial best, and there are more opportunities later on in the film, including the section known as Special Features.

For sheer entertainment value, however, nothing tops Leibele Waldman's shenanigans in the 1931 movie short, *Cantor on Trial*, a takeoff on the familiar song *Khazonim oif Probe* by Sholom Secunda. Waldman's characterizations of three different cantorial candidates at an audition is priceless, and the auditioning committee is a hilarious bunch of Yiddish actors who are, pardon the expression, quite the "hams."

But once again, Yossele Rosenblatt steals the film, and our hearts, with his renderings of cantorial recitatives and Yiddish songs in a documentary travelogue made to acquaint diaspora Jews with Palestine in June 1933. This is actually the final footage of Rosenblatt, for he passed away while making the documentary. The sight of crowds attending his funeral is terrifically moving, and here we have it filmed for posterity. At that point one realizes the importance of this DVD as an historical document, a must for *ohavei Yisrael* everywhere. Rosenblatt is also presented later on in the Special Features section of the DVD, offering an emotional rendering of *Yahrzeit Lied*, a tragic Yiddish song which opens and closes with *hazzanut*.

Moshe Koussevitsky's chanting of *Eil Malei Rahamim* in the film *We Who Remain*, a sobering documentary about the remnant of the Polish Jewish community just after the Holocaust, also appears on the DVD. Koussevitsky — the chief cantor of Warsaw before World War II — was invited back to sing for what was left of the community at a ceremony of remembrance. It is a painful clip to watch, and his soaring recitation of the Memorial Prayer is a wonder. Koussevitsky is brought back in Special Features as well, with an affecting rendition of *V'li-Y'rushalayim Irkha*. Josef Seiden's 1931 film *The Voice of Israel* features Mordechai Hershman singing *Hayom Harat Olam*, and again we are treated to his spectacular voice — a silver trumpet that could melt stone.

This noteworthy project cannot fail to delight and fascinate fans of Jewish music and the Jewish people, historians, archivists, and anyone else who may have the privilege of viewing the DVDs. Kol ha-kavod to Producer/Cantor Murray Simon for his passionate pursuit of this restoration, and to Director Rich Pontius and Executive Producer Sharon Pucker Rivo. We are truly blessed by their efforts.

*Before entering the cantorate, Roslyn Barak enjoyed a career as concert recitalist and opera singer. She received her musical training at the Manhattan School of Music, and her cantorial investiture at the Hebrew Union College in New York. She has been the cantor of Congregation Emanu-El in San Francisco since 1987, chairs the American Conference of Cantors' Publications committee, and serves on the Central Conference of American Rabbis' Prayer Book Editorial committee. Recently, she toured Germany in conjunction with the release of her CD, **The Jewish Soul**.*

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**Hans Cohn's *Risen from the Ashes:
Tales of a Musical Messenger***
(Hamilton Press, 2005).

Reviewed by Deborah J. Togut

An only child, Hans Cohn escaped Berlin with his parents at the age of twelve shortly after Kristallnacht in March 1939. His family immigrated to Shanghai, because China was the only country, other than Trinidad, that would accept Jews at the time. In Shanghai, Hans experienced corruption, poverty, disease and death. His parents had barely enough money to open a restaurant, and worked tirelessly just to stay alive. His mother's untimely death left Hans and his father devastated but not destroyed. The two worked ten hours a day, seven days a week to support themselves by keeping the restaurant going. The culinary skills that Hans developed out of sheer necessity in Shanghai would continue to serve him well throughout his life and provide him with an unfailing source of income, come what may. During his year of mourning, Hans went to the local synagogue to recite Kaddish and also to listen closely to the cantor. A gifted vocalist himself, Hans would listen just as intently to many other cantors before he began serving as a *ba'al tefillah* and eventually as a *hazzan*.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 the Jews' situation in the ghetto of Shanghai deteriorated so much that Hans decided to stow away on a boat bound for Australia. Lacking proper documentation, he feared that his father would forbid him from trying to embark illegally, so he left without saying goodbye. He was eventually caught as the result of a discrepancy in headcount on the boat and about to be bound over for return to Shanghai on the return voyage. Luckily, kindness on the part of a stranger — plus his own Chutzpah — enabled him to escape jail time, and the kindness of locals in Melbourne made him feel at home far away from home. Fear of being caught led Hans to change his name temporarily and eventually move to Sydney. A year later, an uncle in California agreed to sponsor him, leading Hans to emigrate once more and start anew in the United States.

Indeed, his life improved from then on. His uncle's sponsorship had opened the door to a much better life filled with opportunity, but Hans had not graduated from high school. Relying on his skills as a cook, he sought out positions in restaurants. Unfortunately, America was not interested in European cuisine, but in fast food. So Hans did what he had to do and became

a short-order cook. He also began studying voice and attending services at a Conservative synagogue in Burbank.

In 1948, Hans was drafted into the US Army and served in Fort Ord where he met Eva Rhee, the woman who would become his wife. She was of a privileged German-Jewish background and a teacher of English and Spanish. Their courtship survived Hans' transfer to Fort Bragg, North Carolina and they married upon the completion of his military duty.

Through all these peregrinations Hans was deepening his knowledge of Jewish music and his appreciation of Jewish traditions. He determined to study Judaism and develop his skills to their fullest. An opportunity to accomplish both goals presented itself with Hans' acceptance into the cantorial school of Hebrew Union College in New York City — the School of Sacred Music. While studying there he worked at many jobs to support himself and his growing family. By the time he graduated in 1962, he and Eva had three daughters and Hans had fulfilled a life-long dream. He accepted a position as the Cantor and Religious School Principal at Temple Beth El in South Bend, IN. Hans earned a Master's in Guidance and Counseling at Notre Dame University before moving on to Temple Beth Jacob, a Conservative synagogue in Redwood City, CA.

Life back in California continued to bring Hans and Eva much joy both from their family and their work. Yet, he was painfully reminded of what had happened in Berlin during his childhood, when an arsonist set fire to their synagogue and destroyed it almost completely. Years later, a surprise diagnosis of throat cancer caused Hans to retire early from his position at Temple Beth Jacob and modify his lifestyle. Despite this setback, he continued to maintain an office and serve the congregation in every way he could, visiting the sick and leading Shiva minyanim, among other things. Shortly after their fiftieth wedding anniversary, his beloved Eva was stricken with a brain tumor and passed away. Of all of the losses Hans experienced, Eva's death was his greatest. A survivor and optimist by nature, however, Hans continues to make the most of his life by enjoying each day to its fullest, by exercising regularly and exploring his interests. He harbors no resentment against God or man, serving his community with grace and compassion. Spurred by encouragement from his three daughters and six grandchildren, he set his life's experiences down on paper and published them in a slender book that has got to be one of the most hope-filled narratives I've ever read.

Although I am a third-generation American and felt only remotely affected by the Holocaust, I was fascinated by how certain parts of Hans Cohn's life

paralleled my own. After living in Japan for several years as a child, I always wanted to reconnect with the Japanese and learn the language and history formally. So I majored in Asian Studies at Cornell University and spent six years after college working for a Japanese company, traveling back and forth to Japan. I enjoyed straddling the two worlds — my Jewish community and my Japanese colleagues. Along the way, I decided to turn my love for Torah and Judaism into a vocation. I gave up my intercontinental commuting and eventually enrolled in the Cantors Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary. In comparison to Hans' life, however, my story has been a privileged one.

Hans Cohn has led a life like no other. Even more remarkable is his apparent awareness of all that happened to him *as it was happening* and his determination to remain hopeful and optimistic and never to despair, a living proof that Rav Nahman of Bratslav's dictum — *ve-ha'ikar: lo le-faheid k'lal* ("but the main thing is: not to be afraid") — really works. Hans' writing is straightforward, his actions resourceful and persevering, his commitment to survival unwavering and his love for his culinary and cantorial crafts, passionate and inventive. He is a credit to both professions.

Hazzan Deborah J. Togut serves as Ritual Director of B'nai Israel Congregation in Rockville, MD.

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Two CDs of Choral Performances:

The London Jewish Male Choir's 80 Years (ARC Music, 2006),

**Sholom Kalib's Jewish Music Heritage Project
Inaugural Season CD**

(pre-publication edition)

Reviewed by Josée Wolff

At first glance these two CDs are as different as one can imagine. **80 Years London Jewish Male Choir** celebrates eight decades of this well-established choir, highlighting their choral tradition with historical and recent selected recordings. The choir was founded in 1926 and many of its members were

singers in the various London Synagogue choirs of that time. Today's London Jewish Male Choir still includes some of London's top cantors. The recordings are of professional quality, as is the singing; the liner notes include background information about the choir and the compositions in four languages. Soloists on this recording include star cantors David Kusevitsky and Naftali Herstik.

The *Jewish Music Heritage Project Inaugural Season CD* was recorded during two live performances of the *JMHP* Boy's and Men's Choir, a newly formed ensemble created specially for the purpose of these archival recordings. As Ruth Kalib Eisenberg explains, "My dad started the volunteer choir with boys who had no singing experience. They began in November 2005 and were recorded at two concerts that took place just a few short months later — in March and June 2006... To say the least, the challenges were formidable." This is unfortunately obvious when one listens to the recording. The performance is clearly not at a professional level; the singing has many challenges, pitch and phrasing being among the most troubling ones (in spite of the piano doubling the parts throughout). This CD has not yet been published, and the draft of the liner notes lacks some crucial information, such as the names of cantors, soloists and accompanist in the various pieces.

What do these two recordings have in common? As far as I am concerned, the obvious connection is a passionate love for the repertoire of the male synagogue choir. Both recordings pay homage to a rich tradition; each in their own way tries to find avenues not only to conserve this heritage but also to keep it alive. And this is what makes Sholom Kalib's project especially touching. It is clear that he cares deeply about the musical tradition of the Eastern European synagogue. In his introductory words on the *JMHP* prospectus he writes, "Eastern European synagogue music is the quintessential spiritual and artistic embodiment of centuries of Jewish life and history. This vast treasury—Judaism's own classical music—constitutes the musical heritage of the overwhelming majority of the world's Jews. Tragically, this rich and multifaceted heritage is in danger of being lost forever." While we can argue the validity of the first part of this statement (which ignores the vast musical heritage of the rest of K'lal Yisrael), we can't argue the fact that this Eastern European heritage is indeed in danger of being lost.

The sampler CD is part of Kalib's "unprecedented historic effort to comprehensively document and record for posterity the great treasury of Eastern European synagogue music." It is the first one in a series that ultimately will consist of up to seventy-five CDs. On it we hear some of Kalib's own compositions and arrangements as well as compositions by well-known

composers like Lewandowski, Dunajewski, and Alman and by lesser-known composers such as Salman and Giblichman. It appears that Kalib made his choices in part based on personal connections with the many cantors and choral conductors who were his mentors and inspiration. The repertoire is of varied quality; some, like Lewandowski's *Zokharti Lokh (V'al Y'dei Avadekha)*, belong to the masterpieces of our Ashkenazi tradition—East or West. Others are at best, *Gebrauchsmusik*, intended for use during a service rather than in concert setting. Unfortunately, neither category of selections is enhanced by its performance on this pre-publication CD.

While I admire Kalib's intentions and his passion for this enormous undertaking, I do hope that future recordings will be of a higher vocal and musical quality than this one. There are some sweet moments on the disc: the boy soprano at the beginning of Salman's *Mogen Ovov*, and hearing melodies of the Musaf Kedushah (Joshua Lind and Dovid Moshe Steinberg) which are sung weekly in my own synagogue. This repertoire has not yet been lost entirely!

80 Years London Jewish Male Choir covers a broad spectrum of musical styles, representing the wide variety of repertoire that the choir has performed over the years. The opening selections were recorded in 2005 and highlight the current choir with an eclectic mixture ranging from Samuel Alman's *Sefirat Ha-Omer* to an arrangement of *Hava Nagila*. On the next two tracks we hear renditions of *Az Moshiakh Vet Kumen* and *Der Rebbe Elimelekh*, recorded in 1928. That same year London hosted an international competition for synagogue choirs, organized by the Jewish Chronicle. I would imagine that this choir participated (although as someone who grew up in the Netherlands I can't help but kvell that it was the Choir of the Great Synagogue in Amsterdam that won first prize!). It is clear that this was an era when synagogue choirs and their repertoire were highly respected and appreciated. And it is poignant to hear those pre-war recordings and realize that London may in fact be one of the rare places in Europe where the community was not decimated and the choral tradition was able to continue.

On this CD we can hear some wonderful examples of the rich sound of a male synagogue choir, especially in liturgical selections like Alman's *Sefirat Ha-Omer* and Brun's *U-mipnei Hata-einu*. Uniquely British is an arrangement of *Hatikvah*, commissioned for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, and performed in 1952 with the Central Band of the Royal Air Force. The tracks on this disc vacillate between the somewhat banal (*Hava Nagila*, Fisher's arrangement of *Oseh Shalom* by Nurit Hirsh) and classics that have withstood the test of time (Lewandowski's *Shuvi Nafshi* and Schubert's *Tov*

L'-Hodot, Psalm 93). Among the highlights are the Zilberts *Havdalah* with Hazzan David Kusevitzky (unfortunately this is one of the tracks where there is no composer listed in the liner notes), and Alman's *Shomeir Yisrael* with Hazzan Naftali Herstik.

Josée Wolff is director of student placement at the School of Sacred Music, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, and interim cantor of Temple Shaaray Tefila in New York. A native of the Netherlands, she was the first woman from the European continent to graduate from the School of Sacred Music at HUC-JIR and be invested as a cantor.



Subject: Friday Night Alive — Without Instruments!

February 28, 2007

Dear Joe,

In the Fall 2005 issue of the Journal (p. 217), Mark Biddelman makes reference to a Pakistani melody for “Hallelu” as a service opener that can be repeated effectively three or four times unaccompanied. This melody is actually a variation on the song “Allah Huu!” by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, lyrics by Mohammad Iqbal Naqibi. The song is a *qawwali* — a devotional song of the Sufis.



Example 1. *Alla Hu* by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan

One will note upon listening to this qawwali that the modality is not in minor, but rather a major scale with a lowered 7th, although it is truly difficult to determine a true modality since the song limits itself to a pentatonic scale and adds the lowered 7th.

Erik Contzius

New Rochelle, NY

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Subject: An Overview of Music Therapy

September 8, 2006

Dear Ava Lee Millman Fisher,

I opened my copy of JSM this morning and am thrilled with your article about using music therapy and pedagogy to empower adolescents with special needs to succeed at Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebrations! I’m the starry-eyed person who advocated for this topic to be the focus of a JSM volume, but did not have the time to work on it myself. Your article is simply superb — full of practical information, beautifully written and inspiring all at once — and is just the sort of approach I was hoping for, and more.

Lilly Kaufman

Bloomfield, CT

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Subject: First European Cantors Convention

August 21, 2006

Cantorial conventions are a regular feature of Jewish musical life in the USA. But for Europe, Jewish Music Institute staged the first, over three days in June at London's Central Synagogue on Great Portland Street. Thirty-two cantors came from all over the UK and from Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Italy, South Africa and the US. Among these were several of world class: Shmuel Barzilai from Vienna; Yossi Malovany from New York; Alberto Mizrahi from Chicago; Arie Subar from Montreal; and our own Moshe Haschel from St John's Wood synagogue. The inspiration and planning of the convention came from Stephen Glass, Director of JMI's Cantorial Section, who presided and guided with his lively presence and enthusiasm, and from Geraldine Auerbach, Director of the JMI, who organized it. The whole convention was efficiently steered and managed by Hirsh Cashdan, JMI's Special Projects Officer.

The events, a series of presentations followed by animated discussions, covered such topics as a reconsideration of the role of the cantor in today's conditions, the art and skill but also the values and principles that should inform hazzanut, new compositions and giving new life to old ones, master classes on davening and nusah in which everyone was given an opportunity to sing and given an assessment and guidance on their performance, halakhic issues relating to the conduct of services, co-working with choir or congregation as participants, meeting the challenge of the Carlebach type of service, and reflections on the future of the cantorate. A particularly valuable presentation came from Mr. Elliot Benjamin, ENT surgeon at Charing Cross Hospital, whose expertise in the mechanism of the voice was greatly appreciated.

A variety of points made in the course of the discussions focus on the problems facing those who want to preserve and continue the age-old tradition of the cantor. These all seem to arise from one ultimate cause: the lack of appreciation by many congregants (and, let it be said, by many rabbis and yeshivot also) of the music of our prayer. From this stems the lack of training in the tradition, of good new music and of employment opportunities.

Cantors' conventions bring together those with the desire to learn and to teach our precious musical heritage. We hope that all who attended will feel reinvigorated in their will to continue it.

Victor Tunkel
London

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Subject: Second Latin American Cantors Convention

November 12, 2006

The 2nd Latin-American Convention of Hazzanim, sponsored by the Latin-American Rabbinical Seminary Marshall T. Meyer, was held in Buenos Aires on July 16th and 17th, 2006. Fifty hazzanim attended, including students and graduates of the Cantorial School Beit Asaf within the Rabbinical Seminary, plus established hazzanim from Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, Mexico and the U.S.

At this second convention we decided to create a professional organization of Latin American hazzanim which would oversee preservation of the nusah and enable us to be true envoys of the *kahal* before God. All of us have the academic accreditation to disseminate Jewish liturgical music as a foundation of our religion according to Halakhah and Jewish tradition going back many centuries.

As experts in the meaning, importance and order of the prayers we look upon ourselves as caretakers of that precious tradition. As professionally recognized hazzanim we see ourselves as authorities on Jewish music for our communities, as exemplars of Yahadut for our adult congregants and as role models in living according to the Torah for the youth of our synagogues.

Our aim is to create an association of peers that represents our interests and provides a place for exchanging ideas that would further our goals as *sh'lihei tsibbur* in the countries of Central and South America. We also want to reclaim the lost respect that our profession once enjoyed in this part of the world and continues to enjoy elsewhere.

Accordingly, we reached the conclusion that only graduates of the Beit Asaf School or possessors of the same qualifications—to be determined by examination or by virtue of a diploma from a recognized cantorial school — would be accepted as members. As part of the Latin-American Conservative movement known as Amlat (Latin Masorti), we've decided to call our cantorial organization Cantorlat.

Ariel Foigel

Santiago

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Subject: Women's League's Outlook

January 12, 2006

Dear Editor,

I am heartened by the fact that many in the United Synagogue are including “cantor” in their comments about clergy. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about a recent issue of Women's League Outlook, the magazine for women of the Conservative movement. There are several articles, under the heading of “A Movement Transformed,” that include interviews with women rabbis. According to what we read in these articles, none of the women “who changed the movement” have been cantors. All of us involved in synagogue life know this to be a completely false implication.

Sadly, even a woman rabbi—Judith Hauptman—who has published groundbreaking scholarly articles, was not mentioned in any of the articles. The women rabbis actually highlighted were “everyday” practitioners. They held positions in pulpits, Jewish community centers, schools and agencies. They were considered to be groundbreakers simply by virtue of their gender and their presence. It is in this group, I claim, that women cantors should be included.

One congregant at a time, one student at a time, it seems that women cantors must challenge the stereotypes and overcome the barriers of prejudice and ignorance. It greatly saddens me that Women's League, which I respect so much, has chosen not to include women cantors in their list of people who have transformed the Conservative movement. I can only hope that any discussion inspired by this letter will help to enlighten members of our movement who are in a position to change that.

Marcey Wagner

Brookville, New York

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Subject: *Minhah L'-Shabbat*

August 23, 2006

Dear Editor,

I received my Fall 2006 JSM this week, and found it replete with interesting articles that will naturally take time to read and absorb. The one on *Minhah L'-Shabbat*, however, caught my eye.

Geoffrey Goldberg wrote in the Journal of 2005 that before the First World War the Great Synagogue of Munich, which was Liberal, held a special Minḥah service for the many children who attended school on Shabbat. Cantor Emanuel Kirschner who officiated, had composed an organ accompaniment based on the nusah to all the congregational responses — and the children were the “choir.”

Cantor David Kusevitsky once told me that in London’s Hendon Synagogue during the Second World War he would always officiate at Shabbat Minḥah services with a choir. Cantor Shlomo Mandel related something similar. As a candidate for the position of Cantor at the Great Synagogue in Amsterdam, he too was required to audition at the Shabbat Minḥah service with a choir.

The first time I visited in Brussels over Shabbat a generation later, I recall that a youngster was sent up to lead the davening at Minḥah; this was evidently their standing custom. I understand that in the U.S. today, boys and girls are trained to lead that service at their Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebrations.

Akiva Zimmermann
Tel-Aviv

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Subject: Jewish Views of Disability

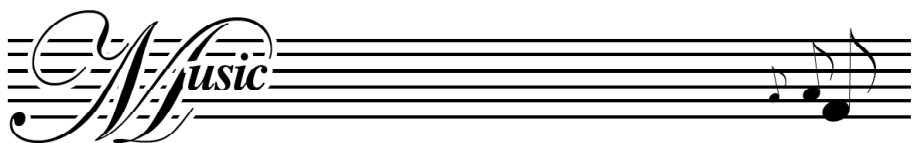
March 27, 2007

Dear Joe,

On behalf of the University of Pennsylvania Libraries and the Freedman Sound Archive, we are delighted to acknowledge your introducing the University’s Judaica Collections to the Fall 2005 and Fall 2006 issues of the Journal of Synagogue Music.

The articles in the Fall 2006 issue dealing with Music in Therapy and Pedagogy are very special, especially Scott Sokol’s piece on Jewish Views of Disability. Please convey our thanks to the authors of those articles and to Dr. Sokol.

Robert and Molly Freedman
Philadelphia



Timeless Recitatives for All Voices and Many Texts

I. Ki Zokheir Kol HaNishkahot

After *Ovadia ha-Geir, ca. 1130, *Mi Al Har Horeiv* Plus Ashkenazic, S'lihot Nusah

Very Broadly, Let Words Dictate Rhythm

1 Ki zo-kheir kol ha-nish-ka-hot A-tah Hu mei-o-lam, v'-

2 ein shi-khe-hah lif-nei khi-sei kh'-vo-de-kha

3 va'a kei-dat Yitz-hak l'-zar o ha-yom b'-ra-ha-mim tiz-kor Ba-

4 rukh A-tah, A-do-nai zo-

5 kheir ha b'-rit. (CONG.) A-mein.

Other texts that may be sung to this chant pattern:

Kadosh Atah
Sim Shalom

HaYom Harat Olam
S'lah Na....salahti ki-d'varekha

My dear scholarly friend, *Ovadia, the Norman Proselyte:

I received your inquiry asking whether you, as a convert to Judaism, are entitled to say in your daily prayers, "Our God and God of our Fathers." I say to you: Indeed, you may say all of these blessings without changing the wording. You are just like any native born Jew in this regard...Once you entered our ranks and joined the Jewish Religion, there was absolutely no distinction between us and you in anything...

Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon

II. M'heirah YiShama

After Salamone Rossi, *Le-Mi Elhpots* ("To Whom Should I give Honor?")
HaShirim Asher LiShlomo, 1623

Andante Fm C Fm 3 E^b A^b D^b G^b A^b

1 M'-hei-rah, A-do-nai E-lo - hei-nu yi-sha-ma b'-a-rei y'-hu -

2 D^b A^b B⁷ E^b A^b D^b E^b B^bm 7 F 3 B^b, E^b7

dah u-v'-hu - tsot³ Ye - ru - sha - la - yim, Kol sa -

3 A^b E^b A^b D^b E^b A^b Fm Cm D^b 3

son v'-kol sim - hah, kol ha-tan v'-kol ka-lah, Kol mits - ha-lot ha-ta -

4 A^b, Fm E^b Fm D^b B^bm C⁷ Fm

nim mei-hu pa - tam, u - n' - a - rim mi -

5 *rubato* A^b E^b A^b D^b G^b E^b A^b, D^b

mish - teh n' - gi - na - tam. **f** Ba - rukh a -

6 A^b E^b A^b, D^b E^b6 B^bm A^b E^b6 A^b7 A^b

tah, ³ A - do-nai, m' sa - mei - ah ha - tan im ha - ka - lah. *rit.*

Other texts that may be sung to this chant pattern:

Y'Varekh'kha

Shoshanat Ya'akov

V'Nislah

Barukh Haba/B'rukhim HaBa'im

III. Ending of Barukh She-Amar

After Idelsohn, *Thesaurus* VIII: 68, # 231, "Tunes Ascribed to 17th Century"

Freely, but balance each pair of hemistichs

1 Ba - rukh A - tah A - do - nai, E - lo - hei - nu me - lek - ha - o - lam, ha -
 2 me - lek - ha - ra - ha - man, ha - m' - hul - lal - b' - fi - a - mo - m' - shu -
accelerando
 3 bah u - m' - fo - ar bil' - shon ha - si - dav va - a - va dav
 4 *con moto* u - v' - shi - rei Da - vid av - de - kha n' - ha -
 5 lel - ha, A - do - nai E - lo - hei - nu bi - shva - hot u - viz - mi - rot n' - ga - del - kha u - n' -
 6 sha - bei - ha - kha u - n' - fa - er - kha v' - naz - kir shim - kha, v' - nam - li - kha -
 7 kha, mal - kei - nu, e - lo - hei - nu, ya -
 8 hid, hei ha - o - la - mim,
 9 me - lek - h, m' - shu - bak - h u - m' - fo - ar, a - dei ad sh' - mo ha - ga - dol. Ba -
 10 *rit.* rukh A - tah, A - do - nai, *sostenuto* me - lek - h m' - hu lal ba - tish - ba - hot.

Other texts that may be sung to this chant pattern:

HaN'shamah Lach ...	Dark'kha ...	L'ma'an kha ...	Ta'aleh Arukha h
Eil Melekh Yosheiv			U'v'khein Tein Pahd'kha
Z'khor B'rit Avraham			Hatsi Kaddish

IV. Ot'kha Edrosh

(French and German Rite: S'lihot for Kol Nidre Night)

Samuel David, *Po'al Hayyei Adam*, 1895: #183

Solemnly — Balancing Each Pair of Hemistichs

Cantor

1 O - t' - kha ed - rosh v' - ei - le - kha et - va - da,

2 ga - dol biy - hu - dah u -viY -ru -sha -la -yim no - da.

3 Hein, A -tah ha -kar -ta -nu va -tei - da, ki f' - sha - ai a -ni -ei - da. Ei -

4 da, a -val a -shei -mim a -nah - nu, u -mei -ha -mon ra -ha -me -kha lo zu - nah - nu.

Andante ♩ = 84

Cong. joins Cantor

5 Hein, ei - lav ka - pa - yim shi - tah - nu,

6 ki v' - sheim kod - sh' - kha va - tah - nu.

Other texts that may be sung to this chant pattern:

Mi Yidmeh Lakh (Cong. joins at Ka'Amur L'-David)

V'-Ya'azor (Cong. joins at V'-Atem ha-d'veikim)

Uv'-nuho (Cong. joins at Ki Lekah Tov)

V. Avot L'-Hol

Abba Weisgal (1885-1981), in Joseph A. Levine, *Emunat Abba*, 1981: #183

Rapidly recited

1 *mp* Ba-ruk^h a-tah A-do-nai, E-lo - hei - nu ³vei-lo-hei a-vo-tei-nu.

2 E-lo - hei Av-ra-ham, e-lo-hei Yitz-hak, *più f* vei-lo - hei Ya-a kov. Ha-

3 Eil ha-ga-dol ha-gi-bor ³v'-ha-no-ra, *p subito* Eil el-yon. Go - meil

4 *mf accel.* ha-sa-dim to - vim v'-ko - nei ha-kol, ³v'-zo-kheir has-dei a-

5 *f cresc.* vot. U - mei - vi go - eil liv - nei v' - nei - hem, l' -

6 *mf* *più mosso.* ma - an sh'-mo b' - a - ha - vah. Me-lekh o - zeir u-mo-shi - a u-ma-

7 *Hatimah pattern -* *rall.* gein. Ba-ruk^h a - tah, A - do - nai, ma - gein Av - ra - ham.

Other texts that may be sung to this chant pattern:

G'vurot / K'dushah / Hazarah

Birkhot HaShahar

Ashrei / U-Va L'-Tziyon / Shir Shel Yom

Ha Lahma Anya / Hasal Siddur Pesah

Kaddish / Hatsi Kaddish

VI. Adonai Malakh

Bezalel Odesser
(1790 - 1861)

Transcribed by Max Wohlberg
JTS ca. 1955

(Eastern European version of the Friday Night mode
on which Jacob Koussevitzky based his more elaborate
recitative, notated in *Ketonef Yosef*, 2000: 99-100, JTS,
H.L. Miller School)

Lightly

1 A-do-nai ma-lakh, gei-ut la-veish. La-veish A-do-nai, oz hit-a-

2 zar, af ti-kon tei-veil, bal ti-mot, af ti-kon tei-veil,

3 bal ti-mot. Na-khon kis'a-kha mei-az, mei-

4 o-lam A-tah. Nas-u n'-ha-rot, A-do-nai, nas-

5 u n'-ha-rot ko-lam, yis-u n'-ha-rot dokh-yam. Mi-ko-lot

6 ma-yim ra-bim a-di-rim, mish-b'rei-yam, a-dir ba-ma-rom, A-

7 do-nai. **A Tempo** Ei-do-te kha ne'em-nu m'-od, l'-veit-kha na'-a-vah

8 ko-desh, A-do-nai l'-o-rekh ya-mim.

Other texts that may be sung to this chant pattern:

Ahavat Olam
Raheim Na

V'-Shamru
Esa Einai (Ps. 121)

VII. Mi-M'kom'kha

Solomon Sulzer, *Schir Zion*, Joseph Sulzer, Ed., 1905: #82

Free Chant
mp

1 Mi - M' - ko - m' - kha, mal - kei - nu, to fi - a, v' - tim - lokh a - lei - nu, ki me - ha - *acc.*

2 kim a - nah - nu lakh. Ma - tai tim - lokh b' tsi - yon *rit. acc.*

3 b' - ka - rov b' - ya - mei - nu l' - o - lam va - ed tish - kon. *3*

4 Tit - ga - dal v' - tit - ka - dash b' - tokh Ye - ru - sha - la - *3 acc.*

5 yim ir - kha, l' - dor va - dor u - l' nei - tsah n' - tsa - him. *6 rit. acc. 6 3*

6 V' - ei - nei - nu tir - e - nah mal - khu - te - kha ka - da - var ha' - a - mur be - shi - rei. *rit. 3*

7 u - ze - kha, al y' - dei Da - vid m' - shi - ah tsid - ke - kha. *3 3*

Other texts that may be sung to this chant pattern:

L'-Dor VaDor

Adonai, Mi YaGur (Ps. 15)

Hazarat Shaharit/Musaf L'-Shabbat

Eishet Hayil (Prov. 31; L'vayah)

L'-David Mizmor (Ps. 24; L'vayah)

Mizmor L'-David (Ps. 23; L'vayah)

VIII. Kiddush L'-Shabbat

Rabbi Isaac of Vorke, in Chemjo Vinaver, *Anthology of Jewish Music*, 1955: 22

Recitando

1 Ba- rukh___ A-tah, A-do-nai, E lo-hei-nu Me-lekh ha-o - lam, bo-rei___p'ri ha-ga-fen.

2 Ba rukh___ A-tah, A-do-nai, E-lo-hei-nu Me-lekh ha-o - lam, a -sher. ki- d' sha-nu b' -mitz-vo-

3 tav v'-ra-tzah va-nu, v'-shab-bat ko- d' sho b'-a-ha-vah u- v' ra tson hin-hi-la- nu, zi-ka -

4 ron___ l' -ma-a-sei v' rei-shit,___ ki hu___ yom t' -hi-lah l' -mik-ra-ei___ ko-desh,

5 *f* zei-kher li-tsi-at Mitz-ra-yim. Ki va - nu va - har - ta v'-o-ta-nu ki-dash-ta mi-

6 kol ha-a-mim,___ v' -shab-bat kod-sh' -kha b'-a-ha-vah uv' ra-tson___ hin-hal-ta nu. Ba -

7 rukh___ A - tah, A - do - nai, *f* m' -ka - deish___ ha - shab - bat._____

Other texts that may be sung to this chant pattern:

Avadim Hayinu (Haggadah recitation)

Shalom Aleikhem & Vay'khullu (before Kiddush)

Nodeh L'kha... Ve'Al Ha-Kol... Ha-Eil Avinu (Birkat HaMazon)

IX. Kol Adonai (Psalm 29)

After a Ladino Folk Song
"Yo Me Nomorí del Aire"

*Otsar Musikali Shel
Adat Ha-Sefardim,
Yaakov Mazor & Moshe
Atias, Editors, 1975: 274*

With Middle-Eastern Intonation

1 Kol A - do - nai y'ho-lel a - ya - lot, va - ye - he-sof y' - a - rot,

2 u - v' hei - kha - lo ku - lo o-meir ka - vod A - do - nai la - mab-

3 bul ya - shav va - yei - shev A - do - nai Me - - lekh

4 l' - o lam. A - do - nai oz l' - a - mo yi - tein, A - do-

5 nai y' - va - reikh et a - mo va - sha - lom.

Other texts that may be sung to this chant pattern:

Ya'aleh Tahanuneinu

Ana Avda ... tav'van u-keshot

Yih'yu L'-Ratson Imrei Fi

X. Melekh Rahaman

Joseph A. Levine, *Synagogue Song in America*, 2001: 161f

Exultingly (Adonai Malakh)

mf E-lo-heinu veilohei avoteinu, melekh ra-ha-man, ra - heim a - lei-nu;
 V'-lo yeira'eh et p'nei Adonai rei- kam ish k'-mat-nat-ya-do, **Fine**

(Study Mode) (Magein Avot)

tov umeitiv hidaresh la-nu shuvah eileinu baha-mon-ra-ha-me-kha
 k'virkat Adonai elo - he-kha asher na - tan-lakh.

(Ukranian-Dorian) (S'lihah -

big-lal a-vot she'-a-su r'-tso - ne-kha; b'-nei veit-kha k'-va-t'hi-lah,
 - T'hinnah) (Adonai Malakh)

v'-ho-nein mik-dosh-kha al m'-kho - no, v'-har - ei-nu b'-vin-ya-no,
 (S'lihah - T'hinnah)

v'-sam - hei-nu b'-ti-ku - no, v'-ha-sheiv ko-ha-nim la'-a-vo-da-tam
 (Ahavah Rabah) (Magein Avot)

u - l'-vi yim l'-shi ram, u - l'-zim - ram, v'-ha-sheiv yis-ra-eil lin-vei-hem;
 (Study Mode)

v'-sham na'-a-leh v'neira'eh v'nishtahaveh l'-fa-ne-kha b'-sha-losh pa-a-mei r'-ga-lei-nu

(Adonai Malakh)

ka-ka-tuv b' - to - ra - te - kha: Sha - losh p'-amim ba-sha-na- nah

(Study Mode) (S'lihah - T'hinnah) (Adonai Malakh)

yei-ra-eh khol z'-khour kha et p'nei A-do-nai e-lo-he-kha ba-ma-kom a-sher-yiv har,

(Pesah Mode) (Shavuot Mode) (Sukkot Mode) *D.C. al Fine*

b'-hag ha-ma-tsot u - v'-hag ha-sha-vu - ot u - v'-hag ha-suk - kot;
 (v'-lo...)

Other texts that may be sung to this chant pattern:

B'rit Milah / Simhat Bat: B'rakhot, Eloheinu

Mi She-beirakh: Oleh, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Holeh, Hatan, Anniversary

Eirusin / Sheva B'rakhot

XI. Tsidduk HaDin

Zavel Kwartin, *Semiroth Zebulon*, 1928: 65

Sustained Recitation

1 Ha-tsur ta-mim po'-o-lo ki khol d'-ra-khav mish-pot, Eil e-mu-nah v'-ein a-vel, tsad-

2 dik v'-ya-shar. Hu. Ha-tsur, ta-mim b'-khol po-al, mi yo-mar lo mah _____ tif-

3 al. _____ Ha-sha-lit b'-ma-tah u-v'--ma-al, mei-mit u-m'ha-yeh, mo-

4 rid sh'-ol va-ya-al. Ha-tsur, ta mim b'-khol ma'-a-seh, mi yo-mar lo

5 mah ta'-a-seh, ha'o-meir v'-o-seh, he-sed hi-nam la-nu ta'-a-seh. U-viz-

6 khut ha-ne'-e-kad k'-seh, hak-shi-vah va'-a-sei.

Accelerado

7 Tsad-dik b'-khol d'-ra-khav, ha-tsur ta-mim, e-rekh a-pa-yim u-ma-

8 lei ra-ha-mim, ha-

9 mol na v'-hus na al a-vot u-va-nim.

Other texts that may be sung to this chant pattern:

Mikhtam L'-David (Psalm 16)

Ma Ashiv L'-Adonai (Psalm 116)

Tsitsit Paragraph (Numbers 15)

M'lokh / Atah Zokheir / T'-ka

Bi'Y'mei Matityahu / Mordekhai

V'-Khakh Hayah Omeir

XII. Vay'khullu

After David Kusevitsky, in Joseph A. Levine, ed., *Ba'avur Dovid*, 1992: 1-5

Freely Chanted *accel.*

Vay'- khul-lu ha-sha-ma-yim v'-ha- a - rets v'-khol ts'- va-am, va-y' -
 khal E-lo-him ba-yom ha- sh'-vi - i m'-lakh-to a-sher a- sah, va- yish-
 bot ba-yom hash'-vi-i mi-kol m'lakh-to a- sher a- sah, va- y' - *lightly*
 va- reh E-lo-him et yom hash'-vi-i vay'-ka- deish o- to
 Ki vo sha-vat mi-kol m'-lakh-to a - sher ba-ra elo-him la- a- sot.
 Ba- rukh A- tah, A-do-nai E-lo - hei - nu, vei-lo- hei a- vo - tei- nu, e- lo-
 hei Av- ra- ham, E-lo - hei Yits- hak, v' Ei- lo- hei Ya- a- kov, *rit.*
 ha - Eil ha- ga- dol, ha- gi- bor v'- ha- no- ra, Eil el- yon, ko- nei- Sha- ma- yim va -
 - a - - - - rets.

Other texts that may be sung to this chant pattern:

Raheim Na (Birkhat HaMazon)

Birkhat Kohanim

BiY'shivah Shel Ma'alah

Hoshanah L'ma'ankha, Eloheinu

Adonai Ro'i (Psalm 23)

XIII. Birkhat HaHodesh

After Josef Rosenblatt, "Shomeir Yisra'eil" Greater Recording Co.
Cassette GRC 144, 1973: A-3

1 *mp* 3 3 3 3
Ye - hi ra - tson mi - l' - fa - ne - kha, A - do - nai E - lo - hei - nu v'ei - lo -

2 3 *f* 3 3
hei a - vo - tei - nu, she - t' - ha - deish a - lei - nu et ha - ho - desh ha - zeh le -
(Optional Duet)

3 *mp* 3
to - vah ve - liv - ra - khah.

4 **Deliberately**
[Cantor] ve - ti - ten la - nu hay - yim a - ru kim, hay -
[Harmony] *p* *pp* *f*

5 yim shel sha - lom, hay - yim shel to - vah, hay - yim shel b' - ra - khah, hay -

6 yim shel hi - luts a - tsa - mot, hay - yim she - yeish ba - hem -

7 yir - at Sha - ma - yim v' - yir - at heit,

8

 hay - yim, hay-yim she - ein ba-hem bu - shah u-kh'li - mah,

9

 hay - yim, hay - yim shel o-she- v' - kha- vod, hay - yim she - t' -

10

 hei va - nu a - ha vat to rah v' -

11

 yir at sha ma - yim, (Optional Duet)

12 **Sostenuto**

 hay-yim she - yi-ma - l' - u mish - a - lot li-bei-nu l' - to- vah A mein, Se - lah.

Other texts that may be sung to this chant pattern:

Shomeir Yisra'eil
Tikanta Shabbat

Tsur Yisra'eil
Atah Yatsarta

Hin'ni

XIV. V'-Khol Mi She-Oskim

After Pierre Pinchik, "Roza D'-Shabbos," *The Repertoire of Hazzan Pinchik*, 1964: 78

Freely

(Hum - - -) *mp* V'-khol mi she-os-kim b'

Cantor, Then Cong.

tsor-khei tsib - bur be - e - mu - nah, *mf* HA - KA - DOSH BA - RUKH HU Y' SHA

Freely

LEIM S' - KHA - RAM, v' - ya - sir meihem kol ma ha - lah

ve - yir - pa l' - khol gu - fam. ve - yis - lah

l' - khol a - vo - nam, v' - yish - lah. b' - ra - khah. v' - hats - la - ha h. b' - khol - ma' - a

sei - y' - dei - hem, im Kol Yis - ra - eil a - hei - hem,

Cantor, Then Cong.

IM KOL YIS - RA - EIL A - HEI - HEM,

Freely

v' - no - mar, v' - no Cong. joins in

mar, v' - no - mar: A - MEIN.

Other texts that may be sung to this chant pattern:

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| (Geshem:) | Ba'avuro ... Z'khor Sh'neim-asar Sh'vatim |
| (Pesah:) | B'rah Dodi |
| (Hashkivenu:) | V'-Hagein Ba'adeinu |
| (S'firah:) | Hin'ni Mukhan |

XV. Ya'aleh V'-Yavo for All Occasions

After Pinchos Jassinowsky, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 1925

Andante with Flexible Rhythm

1 *mf* E - lo-hei - nu ___ vei-lo - hei a-vo-tei - nu. ___ Ya' a - leh v' - ya - vo, ___ v' - ya - gi -

2 - a, ___ v' - yei - ra - eh v' - yei - ra - tsch. ___ v' - yi - sha - ma ___ v' -

3 yi - pa-keid, v' - yi - za - kheir ___ zich - ro - nei - nu u - fik - do - nei - nu, ___

4 ___ v' - zikh - ron a - vo - tei - nu, ___ v' - zikh - ron ma - shi - ah ___ ben Da - vid av - de - kha -

5 ___ v' - zikh - ron Ye - ru - sha - la - yim ir - kod - she - kha, ___ v' - zikh - ron kol am - kha beit Yis - ra - eil l' - fa -

6 ne - kha ___ lif - lei - tah ___ l' - to - vah, ___ l' - khein u - l' - he - sed u - l' - ra - ha - mim, ___ l' - hay -

7 yim u - l' - sha - lom, b' - yom (ROSH HA - HO - DESH) ha -

8 zeh. ___ Zokh - rei - nu, A - do - nai E - lo - hei - nu, bo l' - to -

9 vah, ___ u - fok - dei - nu vo liv - ra - khah ___ v' - ho - shi - ei - nu vo l' - hay - yim. ___

XVI. Alah Elohim BiT'ru'ah

(Cantor, then Cong., verse by Verse)

Beny Maissner, 1978

1 Verse 1 A-lah E-lo-him bi-tru-ah, A-do-nai b'-kol sho-far,

2 Verse 2 Za-m'-ru lei-lo-him, za-mei-ru; za-m'-ru l'-mal-kei-nu, za-mei-ru.

3 Verse 3 Ki-me-lekh kol ha-a-rets, E-lo-him, za-m'-ru mas-kil.

4 Verse 4 Ma-lakh E-lo-him al go-yim, E-lo-him ya-shav al ki-sei-kod-sho.

5 Verse 5 Min ha-mei-tsar ka-ra-ti-Yah, a-na-ni va-mer-hav Yah.

6 Verse 6 Ko-li sha-ma-ta, al ta'a-leim oz-n' kha l'-rav ha-ti, l'-shav-a-ti.

7 Verse 7 Rosh d'-va-r'-kha e-met, u-l'-o-lam kol mish-pat tsid-ke-kha.

8 Verse 8 A- rov__ av- d'-kha l'- tov, al ya' ash-ku - ni zei - dim.

9 Verse 9 Sas__ a no-khi al im-ra-te-kha k'- mo - tsei sha - lal__rav.

10 Verse 10 Tuv ta - am_va- da - at lam-dei-ni, ki v'-mits-vo-te-kha he'-e-man - ti.

11 Verse 11 Nid-vot__pi r'-tsei na, A-do nai, u-mish-pa - te - kha lam - dei - ni.

Other texts that may be sung to this chant pattern:

Hoshana — L'ma'an Amitakh

Hoshana — Even Sh'tiyah

Hoshana — Om Ani Homah

Atah Hivdalta

XVII. Hatsi Kaddish

After O. Camby, *Liturgie Sephardie*, 1959: 72; and N. Castel, *Ladino Songbook*, 1981: 11

Measured

1. Yit - ga - dal_____ v' - yit - ka - dash_____

2. Yit - ba - rakh_____ v' - yish - ta - bah_____ v' -

sh' - mei _____ ra - - - - - bah.

yit - pa-ar v'-yit - ro - mam v' - yit - - - - - sei

3. B' - a - l'-ma_____ di - v' - ra_____ khir - u - - - - - tei_____

v'yit-ha - dar_____ v'-yit - a - - - - - leh v' - yit - ha - - - - - lal_____

4. v' - - - - - yam - likh_____ mal - khu - - - - - tei_____

sh' - mei d' - ku - d'-sha, b' - rikh_____ hu.

Freely

5. B'-ha-yei- khon u - v'-yo - mei - khon_____ uv' - ha-yei d'-khol beit Yis - ra -

L'ei - la min_ kol_ bir_ kha - ta_____ v' - shi - ra - ta,tush - b'-ha - ta v' -

6. _eil_____ ba - a-ga - la u - viz- man ka - riv v' - i - m'ru, a-mein_ **Fine**

ne-he- ma - ta da - a-mi - ran b' - al' - ma vs' - i - m'ru, a-mein_

With Cong., Rhythmically

7. Y - HEI SH'-MEI RA - BA_____ M' - VA - RAKH L' - A -

8. LAM U - L' - A - L'-MEI A - L' - MA - YA YIT - BA - RAKH. **Cantor**

D.C. al Fine

Other texts that may be sung to this chant pattern:

L'-Eil Oreikh Din

Eil Dar BaMarom

Eil Melekh B'-Olamo

Ve'al Hata'im

N'-Kadeish Az B'kol

XVIII. R'tsei ViM'nuhateinu

Eliezer Gerovitch, *Shirej Simroh*, 1904: pt. 1, no. 25

1 E-lo - hei - nu vei-lo - hei a-vo - tei - nu r'-tsei vim-nu-ha - tei - nu ka- d'-shei-

2 - nu b'-mits-vo-te - - kha v'-tein hel - kei - nu b'-to-ra - te - kha

3 sab - ei - nu mi - tu - ve - - kha v'-sam - hei - nu

4 bi-shu-a - te - kha v'-ta heir li - bei - nu l'-ov - d'-

5 kha be - e - met. V'-han-hi - lei - nu, A-do - nai E-lo-

6 hei - nu, b'-a ha - vah u - v'-ra tson shab-bat kod - she -

7 kha, v'-ya nu - hu vah Yis-ra - eil m'-ka - d'-

8 shei sh'-me - kha. Ba-ruk A - tah, A-do - nai, m' ka -

9 deish ha - shab - bat.

Other texts that may be sung to this chant pattern:

V'-sham'ru

Uv'Khitvei HaKodesh Ne'emar

Tsidkat'kha Tsedek

Hineh Eil Y'shu'ati

Aheinu Kol Beit Yisra'el

Eil Malei Rahamim

XIX. Ki Hineh KaHomer

L. Glantz, in G. Ephros, ed., Vol II., *Cantorial Anthology*, 1940: 86

Lightly

1
Ki hi-nei ka-ho - mer, b' - yad, b' yad ha - yo - tseir, bir-

2
tso - - - to mar- hiv_ u-vir - tso - - to m' -

3
ka - - - - tseir, - - - - kein - - - -

4
a - nah- nu, kein_ a - nah- nu, a - nah- nu, a - nah- nu b' - yod - kha,

5
kein_ a - nah - nu, a - nah - nu, a - nah - nu, a -

6
nah - nu b' - yo - d' - kha.

7 he-sed no-tseir, he-sed no-tseir, he - sed no - - tseir

8 la - b' - rit ha - beit, la - b' - rit ha-beit, ha-beit v' - al tei - fen, v' -

9 al, v' - al, v' - al - tei - fen la - - yei-tser.

Other texts that may be sung to this chant pattern:

Yir'u Eineinu

Shomeir Yisrael (all three verses)

Hasof Zero'a Kodshekha (final verse of Maoz Tsur)

Tsur Yisrael

XX. Responsive Ashrei

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Musique Internationale,
Cassette M576

1  Congregation: Ashrei Ha-Am...
[Verse 1] Ash - rei yo - sh' - vei vei - te - kha, Od y' - ha - l' - lu - kha se - lah.

2  Congregation: B' - Khol Yom...
[Verse 3] A - ro - mim - kha, e - lo - hai ha - me - lekh, va' a - vor - kha shim - kha l' - o - lam va - ed.

3  Congregation: Dor L' - Dor
[Verse 5] Ga - dol A - do - nai um - hu - lal m' - od... v' - lig - du - la - to ein hei - ker.

4  Congregation: Ve - ezuz Nor'otekha...
[Verse 7] Ha - dar k' - vod... ho - de - kha, v' - div - rei nif - l' - o - te - kha a - si - hah.

5  Congregation: Hanun V' - Raḥum...
[Verse 9] Zei - kher rav tuv - kha... ya - bi - u, v' - tsid - kat - kha... y' - ra - nei - nu...

6  Congregation: Yodukha, Adonai...
[Verse 11] Tov... A - do - nai... la - kol... v' - ra - ha - mav al kol ma' - a - sav.

7  [Verse 13] K' - vod mal - khut - kha... yo - mei - ru, u - g' -

8  Congregation: L' - Hodi'a LiVnei...
vu - rat - kha y' - da - bei - ru...

9  Congregation: Someikh Adonai...
[Verse 15] Mal - kut - kha mal - khut... kol... o - la - mim, u - mem - shal - t' -
kha b' - khol... dor va - dor...

10 Verse 17 Ei - nei khol ei - le - kha y' - sa - bei - ru, v' - a - tah no - tein la -

11 Congregation: Pote'ah Et...
hem et okh - lam b' - i - to.

12 Verse 19 Tzad - dik A - do - nai b' - khol d' - ra - khav v' - ha - sid b' - khol ma - a - sav.

13 Congregation: Karov Adonai...
Shomeir Adonai...

14 Verse 21 R' - tson y' - rei - av ya' - a - sch, v' - et shav - a tam yish - ma. v' - yo - shi - eim.

15 Verse 23 T' - hi - lat A - do - nai y' - da - ber pi, vi - va - reikh kol ba - sar sheim kod - sho l' - o - lam, va - ed. VA' A - NAH - NU...

Other texts that may be sung to this chant pattern:

V' - Khol Ma'aminim

Hodu HaGadol

Ki Anu Amekha

An'im Z'mirot

Esa Dei'i L'mei - Raḥok

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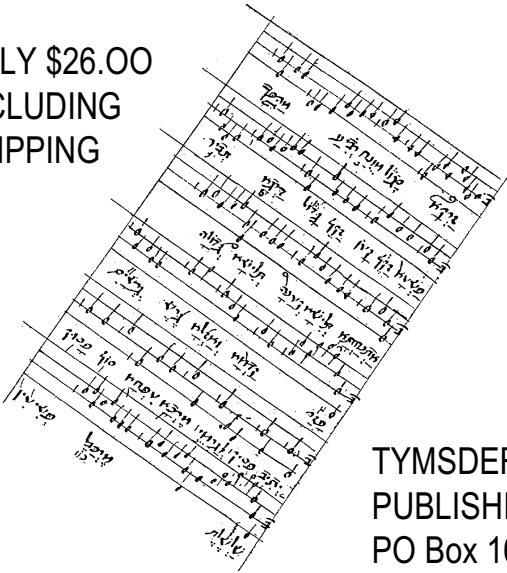
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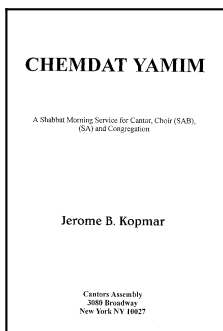
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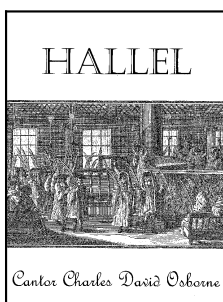
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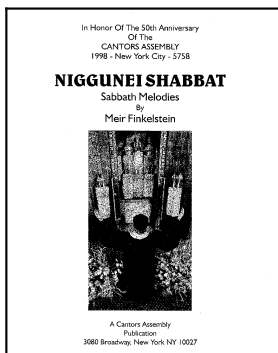
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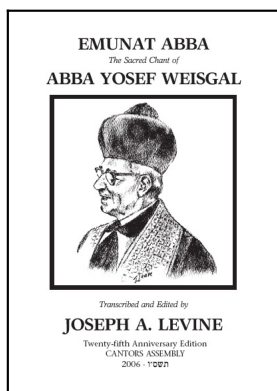
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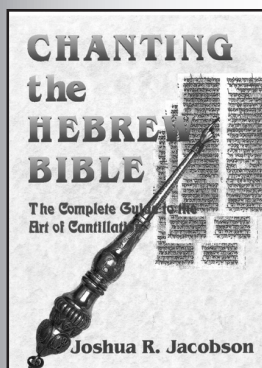


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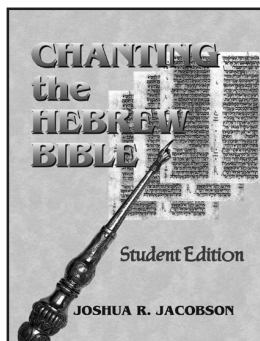
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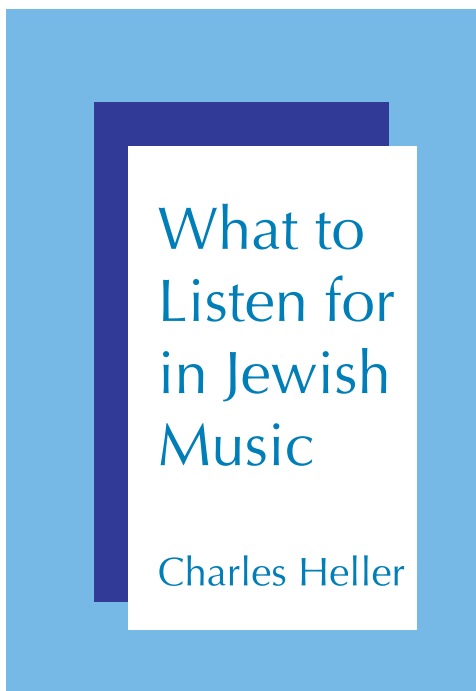
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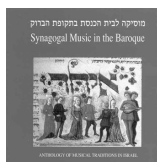
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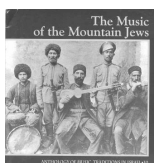
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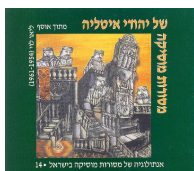
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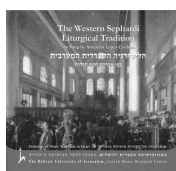
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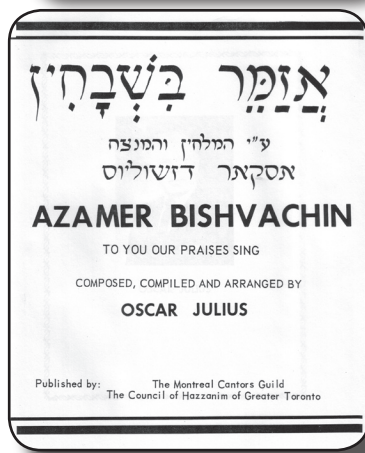
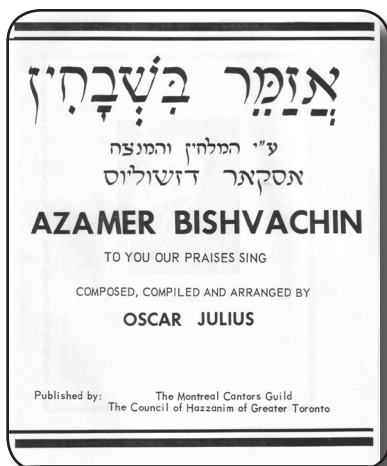
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